ALEXIS CLERC

2,

Alexis Clerc S. J.

ONE OF THE JESUITS!

ALEXIS CLERC

SAILOR AND MARTYR

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BY

REV. FATHER CHARLES DANIEL, S.J.

WITH A PREFACE BY VERY REV. THOMAS S. PRESTON, V.G.

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THIS TRANSLATION IS DEDICATED

TO THE MEMORY OF

FATHER ANDREW FRANCIS MONROE, S.J.

Grand-nephew of President Monroe, Officer in the American Navy, and a Convert to the Catholic Faith.

He entered the Society of Jesus in Rome, made his novitiate in France, was ordained Priest in Canada, and, after spending his religious life like his friend Father Clerc, chiefly in the humble duties of a professor,

Died at St. Francis Xavier's College, New York,
AUGUST 2, 1871,
AGED FORTY-SEVEN YEARS.

A man of "a large humanity" (to use his own phrase), who made friends everywhere, and no enemies notwithstanding his sailor-like bluntness, wonderfully upright and honorable, childlike in faith, simple in piety, a worthy priest and an exemplary religious, he is still regretted by those whose privilege it was to know and appreciate him.

May his soul rest in peace.

WITH PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR

TRANSLATED FROM THE SECOND PARIS EDITION

By M. E. C. D.

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PREFACE.

It is with great pleasure that we recommend to the Christian public this translation of Father Daniel's Life of Alexis Clerc. There is much in this Life which speaks to the great needs of our day. The bright example of self-denial and heroic virtue cannot fail to move many hearts whose aspirations are for eternity. The prevailing disposition of the age is altogether to ignore God, as if his law and will had nothing to do with the end of human life or the happiness of mankind. He is driven from society, from education, from science, and from the counterfeit which the world dignifies by the name of religion. Self is made the end in the way of pleasure, avarice, or ambition. Men would live as long as they may, and then sink into the grave without hope of the future, or with the denial of immortality. And even where there is a certain belief in God, what prospect for happiness has the victim of passion who has never known the discipline of obedience? Heaven is nothing to those who have placed their highest happiness in self-gratification. We have seen the fruits of unbridled passion in the hatred of God and of all who professed obedience to his law. The ever-liv-

ing Church of Christ goes quietly on amid all the tumults of the world and the conflicts of evil. She alone speaks the words of truth; she alone can heal the wounds of infidelity or sin. Her life is above the violence of her enemies, and in this divine life she continues the mission of her great Founder, giving good for evil, and gathering in the waste places of earth a harvest for eternity. Nothing really lives that she does not touch, and all she touches is radiant of immortality. Dark was the hour when the spirits of evil broke loose, and malignant hatred of God held sway. The age of the martyrs returned, and patience, gentleness, pity, and fidelity unto death were the only answer to insatiate malice and demoniac rage. "The Good Shepherd gave his life for the sheep"; so in his footsteps ever arise the children of his love to bear his cross and gladly die at its foot. The sad days of the Commune were days of triumph for the Church, as the blood of martyrs is the glory of her crown.

The reader of this Life will learn these and many truths which may quicken in his heart the love of faith and all its supernatural fruits. Without faith life is not worth living, and even in this material age sanctity is within our reach, and the Mother of saints has children of whom she need not be ashamed. The strife of the Commune is not over, and the red hand of infidelity is not yet stayed. Even in our own beloved country may come the hour when law and order shall sink beneath the violence of unbelief, when hatred of God shall make victims of the innocent and true. Unhappy

France has yet to atone for many sins, and while she suffers, the blood of her martyrs pleads to the Sacred Heart for mercy.

Father Alexis Clerc was only one of many chosen souls whom the illustrious Society of Jesus has given to the world. He has spoken by words of faith, mercy, and courage, by deeds of self-denial and patience, by a life given for the salvation of souls, and by the death of a martyr for Christ. With the sainted Olivaint and his companions before the throne of the Precious Blood he will intercede for his brethren, for France he loved so well, and for us who will seek by his example to be true to God and to walk in the blessed and narrow way of faith. It is strange that the martyrs of the Commune are so little known, and that the story of their death has produced so little visible fruit. Catholics hardly realize how much they owe to these confessors of the faith, while many Protestants who could not applaud the violence of persecution are perhaps unconsciously encouraging principles which lead to the denial of authority, and therefore to the reign of infidelity.

The "Chamber of the Martyrs" at Paris, with the relics of their sufferings and death, is a scene which speaks louder than any words, and sets in open light the two extremes of mortal conflict, the charity divine which bleeds unto death, and the rage of baffled but still malignant passion.

May God increase our faith and give us grace, that, "having so great a cloud of witnesses, we may lay

aside every weight and sin which surrounds us, and run with patience to the fight proposed to us, looking unto Jesus."

T. S. P.

Corpus Christi, 1879.

ALEXIS CLERC

SAILOR,

JESUIT AND HOSTAGE OF THE COMMUNE;

SHOT AT LA ROQUETTE, MAY 24, 1871.

ALEXIS CLERC.

CHAPTER I.

ALEXIS CLERC BEFORE HIS TWENTY-SEVENTH YEAR—HIS ENTRANCE IN THE NAVY AND HIS FIRST CRUISE.

ALEXIS CLERC was born in Paris on the 12th of December, 1819, in the parish of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois ; the next day he was baptized in the parish church.

He was in every respect a true child of Paris, belonging to that middle class whose *rôle* was great even then, but whose ambition was greater still, and whose political importance attained its apogee under the monarchy of July. His education, entrusted to the university at an early age, was all that it could be under the *régime* of the monopoly—neither worse nor better than that of multitudes of children of the Parisian *bourgeoisie*, in whose young souls their professors daily inculcated indifference and doubt, who saw the priest only at

long intervals, and considered him as a functionary to be employed in but two or three circumstances of life, and after death.

Yet withal Alexis had for mother a fervent Christian, a lady belonging to an old Lyonnaise family in which piety was hereditary. "A saint humble and meek"—such is his own testimony of his mother at whose knees he was taught to know Jesus Christ, and was thus initiated into the life of the soul. He lost this mother when he was only thirteen years of age. How long did he continue faithful to her example and lessons? Some months, a year perhaps at the most; then he fell into the common current and became a stranger to all religious practices. Thirteen years were passed in forgetfulness of God, thirteen years which afterwards he bitterly regretted.

He had not been born to be an infidel; he even had strong religious inclinations. "When I was still a very little boy at school," in later years he told a friend, "I heard read from a large book bound in calf-skin the wonderful 'Lives of the Saints.' They all seemed so beautiful to me that I had a great desire to imitate them, and assuredly, to be frank, my wish to please God and to do great things for him was then not less real nor less reasonable than were the aspirations of the saints."

How came it to pass that this holy ardor was extinguished? Alas! it is only too easily explained, and his history is that of thousands, of millions of children, the victims of an odious monopoly. "The poison of the college," he adds, "soon got

the better, and retained it for a long time, of my artlessness and my desire of sanctity." The way and means of this may be readily understood. Where was the pupil frequenting the university establishments, such as they were at that time—I do not enquire what they are now, and I suppose them greatly improved—where, I ask, was the pupil who would not have been abused by his fellow-pupils, and perhaps by his masters, if he had made profession of imitating ever so slightly a St. Stanislas or a Berchmans, or even of going to confession and of attending church ? The masters might not have concurred in such abuse officially ; for, however atheistic the law was, the *teaching state* could not very well proclaim itself as such. But the professors, the heads of public instruction, considered it no fault to attack in their lectures or in their books the Catholic Church, the clergy, the whole French episcopate, and many a one of them gained applause by celebrating the obsequies of Christianity, and by writing : "*How dogmas are exploding !*"

After the death of his pious mother, Alexis found in his family no one to speak to him of God, to remind him of his Christian duties. Far from that, his father, otherwise an honorable man and not lacking in culture of mind nor elevation of character, was a philosopher of the old school, a Voltairean, to speak plainly—an ardent patriot (but after a fashion that was just a little revolutionary), and no detester of the songs of Béranger nor of the pamphlets of Paul Louis Courier. If

we may believe a playmate of our Alexis' childhood, one who visited the house to share his games and from whom there were no secrets, Mr. Clerc, drawn into the liberal movement of the times, and extremely hostile to the government of Charles X., did not rest a mere spectator during the events of July, 1830; and when the throne, undermined by the labors of many hands, fell for the misfortune of France, he congratulated himself upon their success, and had a right to look upon his own as among the victors. His business affairs, for he was at the head of an important commercial enterprise, were not improved by the situation; during the crisis he even met with severe losses, from which he never afterwards recovered. Yet his political convictions remained unchanged; he did not spare sacrifices for what he deemed the good cause, and when the *Siècle* was established his name was among the first inscribed on the list of stockholders. From all this may be seen in what principles Alexis was reared and what maxims were taught him; pains were taken to inspire him with a high sense of honor, an immense disinterestedness, a boundless devotion to his country and to the *sacred cause of liberty,* but of religion there was no question, unless perhaps to warn him against the encroachments of the *priestly party.*

Did Alexis share the passions and prejudices of his father in religious matters? I do not think so, and I did not discover that it was among the subjects of self-reproach when, after his conver-

sion, he was reviewing the years of his youth. No, he hated neither the men nor the things of the Church; indifference and disdain were all he believed he owed religion, and his philosophy, which was entirely negative, went no further.

He pursued his studies successfully, partly at the College Henri IV., and partly in an institution where the teaching was after the method of Jacotot. "The education which we received in that house," one of his early companions writes us, "was the ideal of an education without God. It would be to calumniate Mr. de S— to call him an enemy of religion, but it would be to ascribe to him a merit which he did not possess to say that he was even a deist. I would not have believed the man possible had I not known him. We got along in that school as well as we could."

Then follows a short sketch of the young student whose after career was to be so laborious and so filled with trials to the very end:

"Alexis was idleness itself; but, thanks to his talents, he was one of the most distinguished of the pupils. As to his disposition, I have never known a more genial nor a more amiable person. I do not think I ever saw him have a quarrel. He was on bad terms with nobody, and there were two or three of us who were particularly good friends with him."

The first place among these intimate friends must be given to his brother Jules, who was not more than two years his senior, and who, being but a little further advanced in the classes, had the

same comrades and acquaintances. Their mutual friendship was of the most tender kind, and, later, religion, by making on almost the same day the conquest of the one and the other, drew still closer the bonds formed by blood and by sympathy of character.

At seventeen years of age Alexis was a bachelor of letters. What should he determine upon next? Commerce was not his forte; having no taste for examining and disputing mercantile interests, he would have succeeded in that walk of life even worse than his father did. It was thought that manufactures would open a field vast enough to satisfy his longing to act, to prove himself a man. Mr. Clerc counted among his friends a Mr. Griollet, who superintended a woollen manufactory, and who, to parenthesize, had just bought the château of Voltaire at Ferney. Alexis was given a position in the factory. But the affairs of his patron did not prosper; it became necessary to sell everything, even Ferney; and Alexis, again on his father's hands, was once more in search of a position and less than ever decided upon the career to embrace.

"It was then," says the faithful witness from whom we borrow these details, and who in the kindest possible manner placed his souvenirs at our disposal, "it was then that Mr. Clerc, not knowing what to do with a very intelligent boy who was the object of his deepest affections, showed me the honor of consulting me, although I was not more than a few months older than Alexis. One of my

relatives had lately graduated with distinction from the Polytechnic School. I suggested the Polytechnic. Mr. Clerc asked me: 'But whom shall I employ to prepare Alexis?' I spoke of the preparatory school where my cousin had been. He sent us, Alexis and me, to find the head of that institution. It was thus Alexis entered the establishment of Mr. de Reusse, Rue de Vaugirard, corner of the Rue Féron." *

There the student was the same that he had been during the course of his classical studies; this we learn from one of his fellow-students who followed him, after the interval of a year, to the Polytechnic School, and who was destined to meet him, thirty years later, a priest and a Jesuit preparing for the supreme trials which Providence reserved for him. We have avoided erasing from these lines their local coloring; this, we are sure, will not offend our readers, especially if they have ever happened to frequent the society of the more or less studious youth from whose ranks is recruited the large and illustrious school our hero proposed entering.

"I formed his acquaintance at the Institution de Reusse in 1839. His good disposition, his gay and cheerful temperament, made him beloved by everybody, while, at the same time, his ready comprehension of the *x* won him great respect among the *taupins* (thus in student slang are called those

* The Institution de Reusse, which has not changed its name, is at present in the Rue du Cardinal Lemoine.

who are following a special mathematical course in preparation for the Polytechnic School). He was, moreover, very strong in literary composition. An aptitude for literature and mathematics are rarely found together. He had also a great deal of enthusiasm in his character, yet this did not exclude a great deal of good sense."

This last touch paints him exactly, shows him just as we knew him until the close of his life. His enthusiasm, far from being weakened or extinguished—as too often happens in proportion as experiences multiply—was rather quickened by being purified through contact with the holy realities of faith and with eternal hopes.

After a rapid preparation he was admitted into the Polytechnic School with a very fair grade of scholarship, the twenty-sixth. The same amiable and thoroughly French qualities which had made him a favorite in the boarding-school and college procured for him in this assemblage of young men of such varied origin and character a true popularity, which he preserved as long as he remained among them, and which we have found still alive in the remembrances of several of them. Their recollections of the charming gayety, the sprightly, active temperament, the useful *bon-enfant* character of "Little Clerc" are exhaustless. They were ready to relate to us any number of funny tricks and speeches, always quite inoffensive, by which he amused his companions. There exists at the Polytechnic a custom, a tradition, regarding the manner of welcoming newcomers and of putting their

good-nature to the test. It is not a new thing in schools, and there is much in it to be ashamed of. Athens, in knowledge and practice of it, preceded and probably surpassed Paris, where all through the Middle Ages the rectors of the university had much difficulty in protecting the new arrivals, whose purses were liable to be drained by the payment of their *béjaune*. What is the *colle d'absorption* in comparison with the *béjaune?* I leave the expression without a paraphrase. Perhaps some day it will join *béjaune* in the dictionary of the Academy.

Nevertheless, it must be avowed the fun often enough exceeds reasonable limits and turns into a positive vexation. It was not so when Little Clerc (with General Thoumas, we are assured) was chosen to conduct the trial. Under his management things always passed off in a way that was agreeable to all concerned. We have on our desk a specimen of the problems he proposed and the questions he addressed to his recruits. It is a droll document. In it Greek subtlety clasps hands with Gallic wit, not to mention the forced agreement of mathematical formulas that caps the climax. But there is not a word to offend or wound, and it would seem that those who passed through his hands were lightly tickled but not bruised.

Thus by his popularity he acquired the right to say anything at any time, and was sure of being listened to. One day some ungrateful task or other had been finished, and it was determined to

destroy all traces of it. So behold our big scholars heaping up in a court-yard a mountain of papers; they touch a match to it, then, joining hands, dance around it in the most hilarious fashion. Suddenly Clerc detaches himself from the circle and approaches the burning pile. He merely wants to light his cigar; but they mistake his intention, and the cry is started: "Clerc wishes to speak!" In a moment the dance is arrested, every man hushes his noise and listens. Whether or no, Clerc has to speak, to prove that he *doesn't* want to.

He entered the school in the twenty-sixth grade, he left it in the twenty-third, a sign that he had not quite gotten rid of his liking for laziness. That grade gave him the right to choose among several careers, some of them very desirable, agreeable, and even lucrative. What was not the astonishment of his companions when they learned that he had chosen the navy! "A famous sailor he'll make," said one; "a fellow whose only voyage has been upon the Seine, between Bercy and Charenton!" "He has the ambition to go round the world," added another. "Does he know what it means, he who has never been out of Paris in his life, unless to go *en coucou* to Versailles or Montfermeil?" And so on with a long string of jests.

The fact is, Alexis' vocation for the sea was extremely sudden, and for a native of the Rue Bourdonnais quite extraordinary. He made his first trial of it, without any preparation whatever, by a four years' cruise in the Southern seas, and by "the conquest of the Marquesas Islands," one of

his friends tells us. What had caused him to take so singular and so unexpected a resolution? I strongly suspect, in the first place, that every sort of administrative employment was repugnant to him, and that he was not willing, at any price, to shut himself up in an office. He required air, sunlight, space, elbow-room. Then he had an ambition, not a petty but a vast and lofty one—an ambition to do something great, and to serve his country by placing at her disposal his abilities, and even, if need be, his blood and his life. It was the beautiful ambition of youth, which believes in glory and in magnanimous devotedness, the ambition which Virgil so nobly expressed by the lips of his Nisus:

> "Aut pugnam aut aliquid jamdudum invadere magnum
> Mens agitat mihi, nec placida contenta quiete est."

In the second place, if I look for exterior causes, I discover one which acted, it seems to me, upon our Alexis. There was among the friends of the family an excellent woman, Madame Pagès, who took a lively interest in him, and whose name frequently appears in his letters. She had a brother, Commander Baligot, who was captain of a corvette that was about starting for the Southern seas. "If you would like to be a sailor," she said to the young man, "my brother will take you on his ship and I will give you your sword." "I desire nothing better," he replied. No sooner said than done; and it may be added that when he started on his voyage he knew neither the object nor the duration of the expedition.

There was no time to lose. Named a midshipman of first class on the first day of October, 1841, he embarked at Brest on the *Triomphante* the 22d of the same month, and found himself, the future officer, more of a novice than the last of the cabin-boys, knowing absolutely nothing of the manœuvres or the language of shipboard. But from the commencement he showed the best points of his nature; full of energy and resources, joining a great deal of decision of character to that French spirit of good-fellowship which never makes the man the loser, he gained esteem and friendship directly. Admirably well placed to judge him, Commander Baligot, writing "at sea, December 17," says: "As to Alexis, he is a fine and courageous young man, who at the very beginning of our voyage gave proof of his energy. I hope to find an opportunity of showing him how much it caused me to respect him."

An opportunity soon came, but, alas! in a way unexpected by that excellent man, who gave to the young midshipman a mark of esteem and confidence usually reserved for a riper age and a longer experience. Mr. Baligot died at sea before reaching the coasts of America, appointing Alexis his testamentary executor; and thus at the entrance of his career our hero was deprived of the counsels of the old officer without whom he would never have dreamed of being a sailor. "Commander Baligot," he wrote to his father (from Valparaiso, August 19, 1842), "was, as well as I can judge, much the best sailor I have yet seen. . . . If he is

such a loss to the vessel, how much greater a one to me!" And he adds, thereby making a revelation of his character, which at that period was somewhat inclined to presumption: "Ever since I have arrived at years of discretion—and long before, if indeed I have reached those years—I have always judged for myself—have guided myself by my own impressions, have willed with my own will. This beloved commander was so wise, so enlightened, so noble, that, while scarcely aware of it, I allowed him to will for me; he loved me well enough to do it. His death leaves me without purpose, without object, without will. I am like one wandering without a destination. I needed his strength. One of my opinions was a truth to me if he shared it. No man ever before had such power over me."

So it was that the young man, with his proud, enthusiastic spirit, yielded himself unreservedly and without calculation of the results, happy beyond all expression to have found at last a man—a character, rare thing!

But what is going to become of him whose vocation for the sea was dependent on that one man, and who had lost the support which he needed more than anything else at the beginning of such a novel career.

The elasticity which was in his nature, the indomitable energy of his will came to the rescue; not, however, that he experienced the same joyful confidence as at the moment of departure. Trials were hard for him to bear, and he had plenty of them; he felt them keenly, but was not discou-

raged. He asked himself more than once if he had not taken a false step, and if it would not be better to turn back in time and seek another way of employing his talents. Meanwhile he made the best of his position, conquering his dislike and all the other difficulties of the calling, and taking good care never to be downhearted.

Such is the picture of him drawn for us by an old navy officer who was his companion in that long expedition. This gentleman, a few years younger than our hero, was, though a graduate of the Naval School, only a midshipman of second class, while Clerc, a pupil of the Polytechnic, had been without any hesitation appointed midshipman of first class. "He was greatly my superior in scientific acquirements," this worthy officer tells us; "but, on the other hand, my practical knowledge gained on the school-ship, excelled his, and, understanding perfectly well that if he did not ask explanations he would never learn the details of certain manœuvres which he would be obliged to command to the sailors, he begged me to give him some lessons. So at night when I was on duty he would come to me and I would post him about the ship's rigging, and show him how to tie knots and how to 'make fast' in the usual ways; I taught him the names of the ropes and their proper arrangements. It was thus that in a very short time he was well acquainted with all the details which he would have been ignorant of for ever if he had not had the humility to ask questions of a friend."

In mentioning humility the Viscount de M.

knew very well, and was careful to add, that the religion of his comrade was then in a "latent state." Humility, that essentially Christian virtue, cannot be engrafted upon an absent faith ; but the young sailor was preserved by his good sense from all foolish pride.

This kind of merit, so rare in a beginner, was singularly attractive to men of experience, and appeared to them a very good sign. Mr. Nielly, Commissioner of the Navy, wrote to Alexis' father : "Sir : My second son, who for six months past has occupied the same room with your Alexis, and is pleased with the partnership, desires me to inform you that his friend was well on the 10th of November, 1842; that their corvette sailed the next day from Valparaiso for the Marquesas Islands, where she was to be stationed for six months in the harbor of Nouka-Hiva, then to return to Valparaiso ; and that, to conclude, the chest containing the balance of the effects of the late Mr. Baligot, captain of the corvette, is on board the government frigate *Thétis* in the harbor of Brest." Then follow some details relative to the property of Commander Baligot. Mr. Nielly terminates his letter with these words, which must have been very gratifying to Mr. Clerc : "There now remains for me only to congratulate myself upon having had an opportunity to address a few lines to the father of a sailor who, young as he is, seems to unite to talent and courage the wisdom which assures to his friends and to himself the fruits of those two qualifications."

A wisdom entirely human, we must again remind the reader; at the time he was receiving such praises his morals were far from being irreproachable, and he did not even feel the sting of remorse. Nevertheless, the moment of grace was approaching, and ere long so many natural gifts would be transformed into Christian virtues.

The interior crisis to which he owed his salvation commenced shortly after his departure from Valparaiso, at the Gambier Islands, which he visited on his way to the Marquesas. God there showed him a spectacle that made a deep impression on his observing mind, and caused him to reflect profoundly; it was the spectacle of a growing Christianity renewing the marvels of the primitive Church upon the still smoking ruins of an abject and bloody idolatry.

The theatre where the power of the Gospel was thus manifested is very small, very obscure, and almost ignored by the rest of the world. We often hear of Tahiti, the *new Cythera*, which owes to Captain Cook, and to other navigators as little scrupulous as he, a suspicious celebrity. But, aside from Catholics who are interested in missionary labors and are kept informed by the "Annals of the Propagation of the Faith," who knows anything more than the names, who has ever thought of studying in its most interesting phase the history of those little islands of volcanic origin, Mangareva, Taravaï, Aokena, Akamarou, which form the archipelago of Gambier, lost in the immensity of the Pacific Ocean, about three hundred

leagues from Tahiti and the same distance from the Marquesas? The first time that French missionaries, some priests belonging to the Congregation of Picpus, landed on those isles at the risk of their lives, they found the only population to consist of terrible cannibals, perfectly naked, warring with their neighbors for the sake of feasting upon the flesh and blood of the vanquished, joining, in a word, the appetites of ferocious beasts to the instincts of depraved children; and for the rest, an enchanting country of prodigious fertility. The narrow belt of land which surrounds each extinct crater produces abundantly and without any cultivation, the cocoa-tree, the banana, and the bread-fruit, and these furnish the islanders not only with food and clothing, but with the timber, the roofing, and all the furniture of their little houses. Previous to the years 1834, 1835, all that richness of soil and beauty of climate was the empire of the devil; the Sun of Righteousness had not yet risen upon those unfortunate people *seated in darkness and in the shadow of death;* there was not a soul in all that archipelago who was not a slave to superstition, to anthropophagy, and to the most shameful lechery, and not a word of salvation had ever been spoken upon those inhospitable shores. Fathers Caret and Laval, on landing at Mangareva, the largest of the four islands—it measures nearly three miles in extent—saw at the first glance what sort of men they had to deal with, and what were the manners of the place. The natives gave them a kindly and even hearty welcome, but one which

did not inspire them with confidence. The chief of a quite numerous population having towards sunset offered them hospitality, they accepted a little food, but declined sleeping in his hut, thinking they would be safer in the neighboring wood. Vain precaution! When night came they were the objects of nameless solicitations, and (they themselves relate) proposals contrary to the holiest of virtues were made them. They fled, and were pursued unmercifully. Then they tried to hide themselves by crouching down among the reeds that grew on the shore, when fire was brought into requisition, and they were surrounded by a circle of flames, all the outlets of which were guarded so as to oblige them to fall into the infamous snare. They succeeded in saving their honor and their lives only through a miracle of Providence. Such were the islanders of Mangareva anterior to 1834.

Very well! A few years later these same islanders will be fervent Christians and civilized men; redoubling by their industry the fertility of a soil already so productive; cultivating the arts necessary to the preservation or embellishment of life; welcoming the stranger with a true and helpful charity; practising chastity, meekness, disinterestedness, sincerity, gratitude, and deriving from the love of Jesus Christ and his holy Mother the ideal and inspiration of all the virtues.

And this was what our young sailor saw with his own eyes on landing at the Gambier Islands during the course of the year 1842. He was shown a church, the first construction of masonry in

Mangareva, built of enormous blocks of coral which the natives had torn from the bowels of the sea, as it were, and brought on rafts a distance of five leagues. He became acquainted with the former high-priest of the island, Matua, a species of giant, not long since an anthropophago, and now as gentle as a lamb. Matua was among the first to accept the good tidings, and his example determined the king, Maputeo, his nephew, to receive baptism. In a letter dated at Valparaiso, and written after his return there from the Marquesas Islands, Alexis relates to his father the strange things of which he had been the happy witness, and communicates to him without many comments the first impressions produced in his soul by the sight of this infant Christianity. I will quote a few passages from this letter:

"When we left Valparaiso we knew not the object of our voyage. We went to the Gambier Islands.

"It was ten years since an English government vessel had touched there for a supply of water. The natives fell upon the lieutenant and a sailor, killed and ate them. They went about perfectly naked, and were the most ferocious and savage of all the inhabitants of Oceanica. Now here is what *we* saw: This group of islands consists of four; we visited the principal two, Mangareva and Aokena. The approach to them is very difficult, there being a great many coral-reefs to avoid; and as they produce nothing for commerce but pearls and mother-of-pearl, few vessels frequent

them. Eight years ago two French missionaries with two workmen established themselves there. They learned the language. By their good advice and conduct they gained the esteem and affection of the savages; then they undertook to convert and civilize them. It is impossible to conceive by what prodigies of devotedness they attained this object, and to what degree. The natives are now all Christians; they are honest, good, laborious, and very pious.

"The high-priest who slaughtered the Englishmen was one of the first converts. He is a tall, stout, fine-looking man, tattooed all over, who describes with much simplicity the tricks by which he used to work upon the credulity of his disciples. The king was the most reluctant to be baptized, but he consented at last, and all the people followed his example.

"Now the children attend school. There are two schools, one for the girls and one for the boys; they learn to read, write, and cipher; religion is taught them, and especially good principles; Latin is added for the boys.

"Cotton grows plentifully in these islands; the people have learned to spin, weave, and make garments of it, and consequently they are now all clothed.

"The food of all the natives of Oceanica is the fruit of the bread-tree, prepared in a way that is perfectly detestable to a European; the mess is called *popoi*.

"The missionaries have taught these people of

the Gambier Islands to prepare this fruit better, and also to preserve supplies of it in the earth to prevent the terrible famines which a sudden tempest may bring upon them.

"Finally, these good fathers have built a church, simple, but more beautiful than many of our country churches—built it with the assistance of only two mechanics. The savages brought on rafts blocks of stone from a distance of five leagues, and learned from the workman how to hew, raise, and set them in place. The missionaries found in the numerous coral-reefs that are so disastrous to navigation an inexhaustible quarry of the finest limestone in the world. They built of this a house for themselves and one for the king, and these serve the inhabitants as models for the construction of others.

"The missionaries have not sought to obtain any authority in the country; they have only reformed it and left it in the hands of the king. It must be a very genuine piety that inspires such conduct. Our missionaries are very different from those of the English. The English missionaries work for their own country, ours for the country they are in. The islands where there are English missionaries become English; those where ours are form themselves into little states.

"We spent three days in this happy region, among them a Sunday which was a great festival. The entire ship's company, officers, midshipmen, and men, attended Mass in uniform. The church was filled with a throng of people who sang in the

language of the country, and to an air which belonged to their old religion, a hymn the missionaries had composed for them. The harmony, simple yet striking, produced upon me an impression such as I had never experienced. . . .

"After Mass the missionaries invited us to their house to breakfast with the king and the high-priest. A very frugal repast was offered us, but with such hearty kindness! These poor people use shells for plates; they had bread that day, but they are often reduced to the *popoi*. What heroic devotedness is that of these missionaries! but what a reward is not such a result! I almost thought I was dreaming, or that I was witnessing the reality of a chapter from the 'Natchez.'

"Finally, a wonderful thing in Oceanica, the women are chaste and marriages are respected. Since this has been, the population, which usually decreases among savages, increases a third a year. But I must reserve something to tell you on my return, for I shall return, perhaps. . . ."

This is all, and one would hardly suspect, to read this narrative, only here and there interspersed with short reflections, what a deep and lasting impression Alexis carried away from his visit to the Gambier Islands. But in after life he was often heard to refer to that date the beginning of the work of his conversion, a work which was for a long time a secret one and reached its completion upon another shore four years later. If he had communicated all his thoughts to his father he would not have been understood. And was he

quite conscious himself, at that time, of what passed in the depths of his soul ? If I do not mistake, it was after having seen and sincerely admired all these wonders, and during his second sojourn at Valparaiso, that he saw himself two steps from death, realized it, and yet had not a single thought for eternity.

One day, to repeat what he several times related to his friends and brothers, he was climbing up a steep and dangerous declivity—having, perhaps, undertaken the ascent of some one of the Chilian mountains—when suddenly his foot slipped and he felt himself rolling into the abyss. He might have lain there for ever, but fortunately he was drawn out alive, though badly bruised. The letter from which I have quoted above speaks of two splinters of bone being extracted without very great difficulty, and of the assurance of a complete recovery. Now, at the critical moment when, losing all hope, he bade within himself a farewell to life, among the thousand reflections that crossed his mind with the rapidity of lightning, the most striking was this: "It was, indeed, worth the while, my poor Alexis, to enter the Polytechnic School, and to go through such a rude apprenticeship to the trade of a sailor, only to come here in the end to break your neck so far from your friends, and to leave your bones in this miserable hole !" This was the limit of his philosophy then ; but patience ! the good seed is in his soul and it will bear its fruits.

A sailor's life has this advantage—namely, that by isolating men it ripens them, if they be ever

so little disposed not to dissipate by frivolity the grave and serious thoughts which the sublime spectacles of nature must awaken in their breasts. Man feels himself so little in comparison with the vast expanse of the heavens and the waters, so feeble in his incessant struggle against the elements, that, even in spite of himself, he remembers that he is not master of his life, that he was not made for himself, that his destiny is not in his own hands, and that he is a being irresistibly impelled towards a distant shore about which his reason can give him only a very imperfect knowledge. How will he not welcome the idea of a divine revelation and a Saviour, when it is presented to him in its radiant and consoling simplicity! His ear is closed to the thousand noises of human throngs, and his solitary meditation is not disturbed by the conflict of opinions and systems. Truth, whose mysterious voice is never still, easily makes herself heard in his heart, and takes possession of his whole being from the moment he consents to listen.

From the day he received at the Gambier Islands this first ray of light the young sailor became more serious, more earnest; and without having lost any of the amenity of his pleasing character, he began (this is plainly seen in his letters) to look at life in its graver aspects, and to have a better appreciation of his duties. His affection, always strong, for his father and brothers was purified, and expressed itself sometimes in touching regrets, and sometimes in aspirations and desires. He

realized, now that he was deprived of it, the sweetness and value of the family life.

"I have before me in my secretary," he writes to his father, "my library, the mere sight of which affords me great happiness. How sweet, and at the same time how sad it is, to gaze at these tokens of your affection, and of that of my brothers and friends!

"Alas! this is the cruel part of the profession; the old life is ended, and I shall see you perhaps only three or four times until I am retired from the service.

"To have been so close to happiness and to have left it for ever! Where shall I find the same affection, and, if I could find it, would I be able to break the bonds which bind me to the old? No, and I would not want to if I could. Ah! my dear, kind father, how well I understand now that I wasted my happiness by not enjoying more than I did your affection for me, and by hiding mine from you! How stupid it is to rebel against what is best, to be unwilling to yield anything, to forgive anything! Alone, removed from exterior events, without anxiety about the material things of life, we understand better how much of the true happiness of life comes from the family, and how delightful is constant, mutual affection. I am deprived of it for ever; you are lost to me. What is there to compensate me for such a loss? Absolutely nothing; and the fate of a naval officer is to become insensible as a stone. He has torn himself away from all early affections, and he finds himself in-

capable and undesirous of forming new ones only to be in turn torn from them."

This conclusion, which nobody will be tempted to take seriously, was merely a whim. No, most certainly—and Clerc is himself the best proof of it—the naval officer is not by profession either indifferent or insensible, and he can say with as much truth as any other man :

"Homo sum et humani nihil a me alienum puto."

How sad poor Alexis is when, returning to Valparaiso after a first cruise in the Southern seas, he finds no letter from his father or brothers, no news from his family ! And also what an excess of joy is his when the mail has not miscarried, and he sees the dear handwriting again ! "Let me try to express," he writes in reply, "first of all my deep gratitude for your kind and affectionate letters. What solicitude in my behalf ! Ah ! my dear father, the warmth of my embraces could alone give you an idea of how sweet to my heart are the multiplied proofs of your tender affection. Your good advice is a kind Providence protecting a poor child so far away from home ; it delights me, and I make it my duty to follow it."

In answer to his father's having said that he had accounts to render him, and that he considered himself his debtor, Alexis writes : "I am paid, overpaid. I feel almost angry at the idea of a father's owing accounts to his children. I don't want to ever hear it spoken of again."

As to the advice which the young sailor asked,

and which he always cheerfully accepted, it was about not only the general direction of his life, but took in the details regarding propriety and manners. Here is quite a singular example of it: After a two years' cruise, the time being come for his promotion, Alexis had the very natural desire to return to France, where, after an examination, he would be regularly advanced to the grade of ensign. He already performed the services of an officer, but he had not the rank—a position doubly false for him, inasmuch as his age and his having been a pupil of the Polytechnic School separated him from the other cadets. If we join to this his eager desire to revisit his country and to embrace his father and brothers once more, we can without much difficulty conceive that he would take some steps to obtain from the commander of the squadron—it was, I believe, Admiral Hamelin—permission to return to France at the earliest opportunity. So far there was nothing but what was perfectly correct, and Mr. Clerc had no fault to find. But there had been some gossip about the matter, and what had reached the ears of that excellent father had, from his way of looking at things, attained in his mind enormous proportions. His son—was it credible?—*had written* to ask an audience of the admiral! *Had written!* Was not this forgetting all his dignity, and assuming gratuitously the airs of a beggar? At least, I suppose this was what so shocked a man in love with the principles of '89, and so touchy about equality. But in point of fact the affair was quite different.

Alexis had simply addressed himself, as was customary, to the admiral's aid, and to the off-hand question, "What do you want with him?" of that personage, had replied: "Be good enough to name me to him, and I presume that will be sufficient to make him aware of my business." How relieved Mr. Clerc must have felt when he learned that his son had not been guilty of what seemed to him a platitude! This susceptibility, which was perhaps excessive, will enable the reader to comprehend better than any words what must have been Alexis' education, and what was the level of the ideas and sentiments of his honorable family.

Alexis did not obtain his return at the end of two years, nor even of three, and it was only during the fourth that, weary of a cruise the results of which were not in his eyes very magnificent, he landed again in France. When gazing at the bare and uninhabitable rocks which compose almost the whole of the archipelago of the Marquesas, musing upon the impenetrable mystery with which the expedition was surrounded to its close, and dreaming about the great expected results, he could not help crying out with his Parisian nervousness: "O mountain, what a bringing forth!" He perhaps thought within himself that one sailor more or less in the fleet did not matter much to the projects of colonization that were under consideration, while it mattered very much to him, Alexis Clerc, whether or no he remained indefinitely a simple cadet of the first class. He said something to this

effect to the admiral, who tried, without any success, to persuade him that for the time being it was a great deal better for him to be a cadet than an officer, and who moreover had the want of tact (the phrase does not appear too strong to me) to add : "Of all the pupils of the Polytechnic School whom I have met in the government marine service, I do not know one who is a sailor."

It was decidedly imprudent and really too bad to say this to Alexis. If he had been one of those young pedants stuffed full of equations, who would not touch with the end of their finger the smallest piece of rope, the lesson, if lesson there was, would have been well given ; but we have seen that our cadet did not deserve it in the least degree, and that by his anxiety to instruct himself and to learn his profession even from his inferiors he had caused the best opinions to be entertained of him. Thus it was that this quality of pupil of the Polytechnic School, which would have opened to him all the gates of a civil career, became an obstacle to his advancement ; those studies, that theoretical knowledge elsewhere so highly appreciated, were laughed at here, and pronounced to be merchandise only fit to throw overboard. This gave the young man food for serious reflection ; he took a cool survey of his position, and saw himself in the isolation in which he had been left by the death of the regretted Commander Baligot. No name, no fortune, no military or naval notoriety in his family, none of those important relations that assist merit to rise, when they do not take

the place of merit altogether. Could he rely upon his sudden determination to be a sailor? If he had deceived himself, would it not be better to retrace his steps while there was yet time? Upon this point he examines himself, analyzes himself from head to foot, and then consults his best friend and his surest adviser, that enlightened father to whom he has recourse on all occasions:

"I have not, I think, a great deal of ambition to sustain me in these continual struggles. Must one impose silence on that pride which claims an elevated position? Or, on the other hand, must one make the sacrifice, at any price save that of honor, of all pretension to rank? Or, again, shall I, fulfilling all my duties with modesty, wait till fortune deigns to think of me?

"The career of ambition is difficult, uncertain, and irritating on account of the constant disappointments one meets with; it is doubly so to me, who have no guide, and who feel only rarely that sacred fire which animates men whose ambition is noble. Now, I shall never have the narrow ambition of certain persons whom I know, who see in elevation only elevation, and the prestige and money that are attached to it, and do not in the least see in it a means of exercising their talents with advantage and success.

"Would not the following plan be the best for me? To occupy myself quietly with the ideas which I love, to nourish the sentiments which are sweetest to me, and, fulfilling the duties of my

calling in the best possible manner, to trust the future to happy chance?"

A noble nature after all, that, even before being transfigured by grace, understood the full value of disinterestedness, and never sought after what was low or unworthy.

We are ignorant of the father's reply. Doubtless he reserved his counsels for the time when, his son being returned to Paris, their mutual exchange of sentiments would be pleasanter and more intimate. That time seemed always to be postponed. Alexis told his friends that they would find him greatly changed; that having parted from them at twenty-two, he would rejoin them at twenty-six—a long period of life, *grande spatium*, as Tacitus says, for men at that age.

In the first part of January, 1845, while going from Arica to Islay (Peru), he wrote to his father and communicated some of his melancholy reflections. He finished his letter by saying: "I propose to make, on our arrival at Callao, which I hope will be soon, new attempts to leave the vessel; but I have little hope of succeeding. I think I will be able to inform you of their result in this letter, which I shall mail only at Callao." Nevertheless, the end of this long and tedious cruise was approaching, and, contrary to all expectation, he was able to add to his letter this *post-scriptum*: "To-day, January 21, the corvette has reached Callao. I have obtained the permit to return home on the frigate *Charte*, commanded by Mr. Penaud. She sails to-morrow for Valparaiso, and

thence for France. That will be about the 25th of February, so I shall probably be in Brest at the beginning of July, and with you by August. But I have not joined the *Charte* as an officer. Nothing has deterred me when there was question of hastening my return." He submitted, therefore, to a final trial, and, at twenty-six years, resumed the rank and service of a midshipman ; but he was going at last to see France once more and to embrace his father.

When he stepped on the soil of his native land he had had four years of service at sea ; he had visited in America, the coasts of Brazil, of Chili, and of Peru, and had sailed all over Oceanica, stopping successively at the Gambier Islands, the Marquesas, Tahiti, and the New Hebrides. His experience of the sea, which was nothing when he started, now began to surpass that of a midshipman of the first class. We have proof of this in the report given of him by Captain (since Admiral) Penaud, an officer of merit, but who, we are told, did not sin by excessive indulgence. This is his report of Alexis Clerc : "Active, and makes himself useful ; has a taste for the sea, and has learned a great deal more in practice than might be expected of a pupil of the Polytechnic School." *

But the great result of this cruise was for him the divine ray that had penetrated his soul at the sight of the Gambier mission—a ray whose ever-

* Archives of the Naval Bureau.

increasing clearness would illumine his whole life and discover to him the *straight path* in which God himself guides his elect. How far had this marvellous transformation progressed at the close of his four years of sea service? We know from good authority that at the moment of leaving Valparaiso for France he imparted to an officer, with whose Christian sentiments he was acquainted, his desire to become a Christian also, and begged him to give him introductions to some friends whose example and counsels might further so laudable a purpose. Therefore it is certain that indifference was banished from his soul, and we may regard him as already on the right road. We would probably be more edified by his interior dispositions if we could find a letter which he sent to his father for a third person, and to which he drew his father's attention by the following words: "This parcel contains a letter for my Uncle Bourgeois, which I beg you to forward to him. I would like you to read it without being too much astonished, and especially without believing that I am not sincere. There are so many recesses in the human heart that the most opposite things may be found there."

What, then, is this revelation he makes to his uncle of a recess of his heart which is quite new to his own father, whom he would have share the secret? The reader will divine it when he learns that the Uncle Bourgeois was a perfect Christian, as well as a man of quite a high order of intellect, and occupying a certain position in the scientific world. Alexis doubtless hoped by this means to

suggest to his father reflections which, novel as they were to himself, would be gladly welcomed by his uncle, but could not without preparation be addressed to the one of the three who had the greatest need to be influenced by them.

It seems as though the reader must now have become pretty well acquainted with this young man, not only by means of the unanimous testimony of the companions of his childhood and youth, but still more through the living likeness he has left of himself in those letters to his father from which we have several times quoted.

His was a transparent nature, and, for the rest, perfectly straightforward, loyal and generous to a fault, and glowing throughout. Notwithstanding many lost pages which will probably never be found, his life already appears to us like an open book which all may read without difficulty, and wherein the sense of things is plain without the aid of any commentary.

In sorting his papers I came across a singular note in an unknown handwriting, and one which does not reappear in his voluminous correspondence. Was it scrawled by a somnambulist? Or is it the work of somebody who pretended to unravel people's character, and read their destinies from a few lines of their handwriting? An honest man will sometimes, if only for sport, lend himself to these attempts at divination; and if the attempt happens to be successful, the paper is thrown in a desk and preserved as a curiosity and a souvenir.

Whatever was the origin of the document to

which I refer, here are some paragraphs from it that are certainly applicable to the subject of this biography :

"Active, energetic, impressionable, irritable ; extremely enterprising, laboring with enthusiasm and nevertheless easily discouraged. Needs to be supported by others." Doubtless, but also knowing how to support himself when all exterior help fails, and struggling *with courage* against discouragement.

"A great deal of spontaneity, irresolute, slow to decide ; lively passions, anger easily roused." Both true and false, but more the former than the latter.

"Speech quick and jerking at times." Very good. "Ideas eccentric and fantastic." True again, but with this reserve : his wayward and fantastic imagination was overruled by sound common sense. "Will have quarrels and lawsuits." The sagacity of our soothsayer is quite at fault on this point ; Alexis could not have lawsuits for the very simple reason that his rather empty purse was open to everybody, and to him who asked for two sous he would give three, and even more.

"Marked sincerity, sometimes exaggerated." Wonderfully correct.

"He will travel a great deal and make long voyages." I suspect this was not arrived at by pure and simple divination, but by an easy process of induction.

"A restless life and business troubles" (no more business than lawsuits). "Fortunate chances now

and then, but will not derive from them all the advantage possible."

"Useful and devoted to his friends." Yes, and we shall meet with more than one proof of it.

Finally, a last stroke, and a seemingly prophetic one: "Will encounter great and diverse perils." How did the magician know this? Probably by means of very vague conjectures which might just as well never have been realized.

Nevertheless, given the strong and positive character of our hero, a certain Christian philosophy would lead to the conclusion that Providence doubtless reserved for him trials in proportion to his energy and courage. "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb" is an old proverb, and one that is of some value, for it reassures and consoles those who do not feel themselves sufficiently well armed for the struggles of life.

But, on the other hand, for a similar reason, to the strong great and hard trials! According to this our Alexis should expect to encounter combats and tempests.

CHAPTER II.

SOJOURN IN FRANCE—ANOTHER CRUISE—CONVERSION.

We know little of Alexis' sojourn in France from October 14, 1845, to May 26, 1846, the date of a new embarkation.

From the moment he was with or near his family his correspondence fails us. Nevertheless, we are able to relate almost in detail how he filled up that interval of about seven months. Judging from its results and from his reminiscence of it in his letters afterwards, it was not time lost either with regard to his career or to his progress towards a Christian life.

At Toulon, having finally succeeded in passing his examination, he was promoted to the rank of ensign. Then he went to Paris, and was not idle there, as we shall see.

To be an ensign at twenty-six years of age was not a bewildering success, and, after his experience, our young officer could not promise himself a rapid advancement. Moreover, he still had his doubts as to whether he had made the right choice of a career. We do not know if it was by the advice of his father or of some friend of the family

that he determined, at all events, to prepare himself to enter on another more in harmony, perhaps, with his antecedents—that of public instruction. Certain it is that he set himself courageously to the study of mathematics, and even became a pupil of one of his old companions of the Polytechnic, Mr. Joseph Bertrand, then a professor at the College St. Louis. In three months he had obtained the diplomas of bachelor and licentiate of the mathematical sciences, and was preparing for the degree of doctor, when the prospect of a new expedition re-engaged him to the sea for a long period.

But the preparation for his examinations was far from absorbing him completely, and he undertook at the same time studies of a very different nature, and which were to give to his life quite another direction.

As we have already said, he was not systematically an infidel, and the Voltairianism of his father had never gained an empire over him. Still less had he allowed himself to be carried away by the absurd doctrines of Fourier, who then counted numerous disciples in the Polytechnic School.

Wiser on this single point than so many others, he had made no compact with error. But from the age of fourteen, having never entered a church, he had heard no mention of God, neither had he read anything of such books as enlighten man regarding his future destiny and his eternal hereafter. He had become an absolute pagan. He needed to be educated over again. He understood this, and applied himself resolutely to the task.

It happened to him as to Marceau, that grand Christian who, like our young hero, was extremely ignorant, and impious to a degree that was somewhat aggressive, until the day when the scales fell from his eyes. Urged by I know not what curiosity, or rather obedient to a first and mysterious impulse of grace, Captain Marceau asked an ecclesiastic of Toulon* for a book on the Catholic religion, one in which the question was thoroughly discussed. The worthy priest gave him Duvoisin's "Démonstration Evangélique." Marceau read it from beginning to end, at first with a certain mistrust and suspicion, then with passionate interest, while light penetrated deeper and deeper into his soul. And this, his historian relates, was the commencement of his remarkable conversion, which preceded by several years that of Alexis Clerc.

Who was it that placed the same book in our young sailor's hands? I do not know; but what I do know is that he read it with the same fruit as Marceau, and that later he recommended it to his friends as a remedy the efficaciousness of which he had himself experienced. It is truly a very good book, written with all the seriousness that characterized the old French school. Born towards the middle of the eighteenth century, Duvoisin had been a professor of the Sorbonne before the Revolution. The Concordat made him a bishop, and he administered the diocese of Nantes wisely; but, for his misfortune, in 1811 he be-

* The Abbé Gilbert, vicar of St. Mary's.

came a member of the ecclesiastical commission presided over by Cardinal Fesch, and, alas! on that memorable occasion he was not heroic. There fell a blot upon his name, but this should in no-wise detract from the value of the remarkable apologetic treatise of which he was the author. Every man desirous of instruction in that which it is sinful to be ignorant of, will find there, in a few pages written without pretension, but not without warmth, though in a style that is always moderate and discreet, all the elements of a solid and deliberate conviction.

"Is the Christian religion a revealed religion? This is the state of the question. It is the question of a fact which can only be decided by facts—that is to say, by all the proofs that are the most convincing, the most easily understood, and the most analogous to the principles and sentiments that influence us in the ordinary course of life. The Author of Christianity declared himself to be the envoy of God. His disciples affirm that he justified his mission by prodigies evidently supernatural, and they offer in proof of this not only their testimony, but also similar prodigies worked by them in the name of their Master. Did Jesus Christ and his apostles work the miracles that are attributed to them? and have these miracles, with respect to us, a degree of certainty that does not permit a reasonable man to call them in question?" ("Démonstration Evangélique," p. 4. Paris, 1818.)

This is, in short, the whole question; it is clearly put, and, we should add, conscientiously

resolved—so conscientiously that in reaching the conclusion of his book the apologist may address God himself, and say to him with Richard of Saint-Victor: "God of truth! I believe firmly all thou hast revealed to me through Jesus, thy Son. He alone has the words of eternal life, and there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved. I do not fear to wander in following such a guide. But if, to suppose an impossibility, my faith were an error, it would be thou who would have deceived me in permitting Christianity to be marked with characters whereon I recognize the impress of thy omnipotence." *

We have desired by the foregoing paragraphs to draw the attention of the reader to a book which Alexis Clerc, from his personal experience afterwards confirmed by more profound study, held in high esteem.

Alexis also read the "Pensées" of Pascal, and as he was extremely sensitive not only to the philosophical range of the ideas but still more to the beauty of the language, he infinitely enjoyed the illustrious thinker who is undoubtedly one of our greatest writers. Whether he compares the enterprise of Jesus Christ with that of Mohammed, and arrives at the conclusion that "since Mohammed succeeded, Christianity must have perished if it had not been sustained by a divine power"; or whether he says quite simply, but with the authority of an

* Domine, si error est quem credimus, a te decepti sumus; quoniam iis signis prædita est religio, quæ nonnisi a te esse potuerunt.—Richard of Saint Victor, quoted by Duvoisin, "Démonstration Evangélique," p. 360.

immovable conviction, that he believes "witnesses that imperil their lives," Pascal, who, under different circumstances, would perhaps have been the most powerful of apologists, abounds in expressions that bear the stamp of genius and are like so many medals commemorative of the great, divine events which compose the entire history of Christianity. He is, however, less exact, less to be depended on, when, seeming to take pleasure in making a complete revelation of the misery of fallen man, he is filled with indignation at the immense ruin, and undertakes to despoil the image of God of whatever still remains to recall its origin. If human reason were as infirm as he pretends, as fatally prone to error, we should be forced to despair of it, we should be obliged to renounce all hope of persuading it to accept the first principles of faith. Therefore, whatever else may be said of it, in this part of his sublime essay Pascal is more Jansenist than Catholic, and the painful scepticism which so frequently breathes from his immortal pages is not always unfraught with danger. It was a remarkable thing! Clerc, though the merest novice in these matters, had a confused consciousness of this weak side of an author of genius, and we shall see in a letter to be referred to presently that he did not regard the "Pensées" as a book very well suited to enlighten a certain class of minds.

I am unable to say if it was then or afterwards that he also read and singularly enjoyed La Bruyère's eloquent chapter on "Les Esprits Forts";

and as it was his habit to communicate his likes and preferences to the fullest extent possible, we shall see him sharing with his friends his admiration for that remarkable fragment, the apologetic value of which is certainly not to be disdained.

Thus, from the beginning, guided solely by his love for the true and the beautiful, Alexis entered on their own level the society of the great Christian spirits of the seventeenth century, and found himself at his ease with them passably well for a child of the nineteenth educated in quite another school. Later he did better still: he bravely approached St. Augustine and St. Thomas, consecrated his leisure to them, became their disciple, and, when necessary, their interpreter—a rare resolution in a man of his profession and one who did nothing from caprice.

Nevertheless, all was not yet accomplished, and the conversion of the heart was strangely behind that of the intellect. In spite of the promises which he had made himself he did not profit by his sojourn in Paris to obey the voice that said to him as to the poor leper: "*Ostende te sacerdoti.*" If he saw the priests it was afar off.

At that time there were in Paris illustrious priests—later he would know them better—whose eloquence filled the nave of Notre Dame with an immense auditory, young and eager for good. In descending from the pulpit at the close of the Lent of 1845, Father de Ravignan had said: "Rise up, then, young men, in the midst of a sick society, and proclaim to it your strength and your hap-

piness ; let it meet you, let it see you wherever evil needs a remedy or the good consolation and support. Display the courage of Catholic convictions in the most advanced posts of the struggle, in the combat of science, of philosophy, of letters, of industry, of arts, and of liberty. Let the loud voice of Christianity resound in that chaotic confusion of opinions and doctrines. Tell the multitudes that you desire, that *we* desire, the glory and prosperity of the country, the development of its institutions, the free range of genius and of great thoughts. Feel yourselves to be placed very high, and teach those who are ignorant your language and your faith; re-establish by Christian conscience the empire of justice, of truth, and of a holy independence. Be assured of it, you have received more power and perpetuity than all the exhausted experimenters in human theories."

Such was the keynote at that date, and the grave and austere voice of Father de Ravignan did not sound it with the same vibrations as did Father Lacordaire's, which was more in sympathy with youth. What years were those, and what men ! In the Chamber of Peers Montalembert was daily at the breach, the indefatigable champion of every great Catholic cause. The struggle continued for two years ; and if, on one side, we were saddened by a revival of impiety which showed itself in the periodical press, and even in the chairs of higher instruction, we took courage when we saw the entire episcopate guiding to the battles of the holy war the generous sons of the Crusaders.

The Society of Jesus was proscribed; it had to hide itself and play dead to humor the timidity of the powers that were; but it had just affirmed its existence as it never had before since the beginning of the century, in the eloquent plea of Father de Ravignan entitled "De l'Existence et de l'Institut des Jésuites." The liberty which Father de Ravignan claimed in the name of common law, Father Lacordaire had taken shortly before. He had mounted the pulpit of Notre Dame clothed in the white robe of the Dominicans, and none had dared ask him by what right he wore the habit of his order.

All France had its eyes fixed upon those two illustrious religious, who, in the full zenith of the most exalted fame, were rivals only in eloquence, apostolic zeal, and fraternal charity. After the appearance of Father de Ravignan's beautiful book, Father Lacordaire, at a solemn sitting of the *Cercle Catholique*, presided over by the Archbishop of Paris, cried out: "If we were in England I should propose three cheers for Father de Ravignan." These words were followed by unanimous applause three times repeated.*

Can it be supposed that Clerc, who returned to France with the intention of professing Christianity, remained unmoved by those grand spectacles? Should I be told so I would not believe it, so contrary would such indifference be to what I know

*"Life of Father de Ravignan," by Father de Ponlevoy, vol. i. p. 289.

of his character. Nevertheless, whatever were his sentiments, he did not then take the decisive step. Even worse: finding himself again in the midst of the same temptations to which he had yielded so many times before, he experienced the same weakness as in the past, and felt further than ever distant from the goal towards which tended, notwithstanding, all the convictions of his Christianized reason.

I find the avowal of this in some manuscript notes that bear the date of a long retreat made at Saint-Acheul after his entrance in the Society of Jesus.

Permit me to raise this veil. Let it be well understood that it is with all the respect due to his venerated memory and to his glorious death, but with the sincerity which he would have practised himself if, a new Augustine, he had left us the book of his "Confessions." Ah! well. Yes, I believe the accusatory notes of his retreat at Saint-Acheul, and I am not afraid to divulge here the wanderings of his youth, which were to be transformed into the triumph of infinite mercy. Like so many other children of the world, in that infected atmosphere of Paris he had early made acquaintance with evil, and he had no horror of it. The educational houses which he entered, endowed with a dangerous precocity, were poor protectors of his innocence, and he lent a willing ear to the voice of his passions. Once—probably to exempt himself from all religious practices—he had the sad courage to call himself a Protestant; and if he

then imposed upon himself some sort of restraint, it was not virtue, for in reference to it he names himself a *whited sepulchre*. But dissimulation was too repugnant to his nature; he soon threw off the bridle and would not appear other than he was. The Polytechnic School, Brest, the Marquesas Islands, Valparaiso, and finally Paris whither he returned after having received the first impressions of grace—each of these names excites his remorse by bringing to his memory the excesses and the scandals of his youth.

St. Augustine, who knew something of such matters, eloquently describes to us that state of struggle wherein, the reason being convinced and three-quarters submissive, the heart still hesitates and has not the courage to break the bonds which hold it captive under the yoke of the senses.* His evil and frivolous inclinations emulated one another in pulling him by the garment of his flesh and murmuring in his ear: "What! thou wilt quit us? Then all is over, and the separation will be eternal. Then the time has come when thou shalt never again enjoy thy liberty."

This was the state of Alexis' soul on his return to Paris after his cruise in the Southern seas, and this was the reason why he, who already believed and desired to practise, could be present at those grand manifestations of Catholic faith which aroused the heaviest sleepers, and take no part in them save by his regrets joined to the sentiment of

* "Confessions," b. viii. c. xi.

his unworthiness. So true it is that strength of character is not everything, and that souls of the most tempered metal succumb just where the little and the weak gain the victory with the grace of God.

During the month of May we find Alexis again at Toulon, in active service and getting ready for a new voyage. His correspondence, interrupted by his stay in Paris, reopens and gives us light regarding his interior at a period that was very near his conversion.

"My dear father," he writes on Sunday, the 30th of May, "I sail to-morrow, Monday, on board the steam corvette *Caïman* for the station of Senegal. I received my orders only Wednesday. The preparations for so sudden a departure, and, still more, the certainty that I could receive no reply to my letter, have caused me to put off writing until to-day. I would have been very glad to have heard from Paris, especially about the subject of the last letter I sent you; and as I hoped from day to day to receive your reply, I have delayed until the last day the last words which I can write to you in France. This expedition, which I did not in the least expect, has been avoided as far as possible by everybody; hence, as a matter of course, it falls to my lot. I regret that I am not to embark at least in a ship. But the worst of all is that I am again to go a long distance, and be absent, perhaps, a long time. I count on a cruise of at least a year's duration; but it is impossible to foresee anything now. Notwithstanding all the inconveniences of this

voyage, I believe I have resigned myself to it philosophically enough. I am fully convinced that nobody possesses sufficient sagacity to look into the future and so far ahead. Meanwhile, I can only say that I am hopeful. I expect quiet and peace on shipboard, and that is all. That being secured, I shall have, I hope, something to fill the time during the cruise."

He carried books with him as usual, but his library was now renewed, and religious works filled a large place in it. He knew not whither God was leading him; by an instinctive presentiment he tried to hide away from the lash that was soon to cut him to the quick.

Another letter, commenced at sea June 22, and finished the 27th outside the bar of Senegal:

"We have, my dear father, this morning, June 22, passed the Canary Islands without touching at them, and to-morrow we shall have the sun in the north. Madame Pagès will probably before you receive this have communicated to you the contents of a letter I sent from Cadiz, so I need only give you my news since that date. You already know from Madame Pagès' letter that before going to Cadiz we landed the consul of Mogadore at Tangier. We were to return for him after he should have conferred with the consul-general of France, and take him to his destination. We left Cadiz on the 13th, but we met at the entrance of the straits an extremely violent easterly wind, and the commander judged it prudent to return to Cadiz. That same evening we were anchored op-

posite the city. The next day, Sunday, the 14th, I was on watch, and had just succeeded in consoling myself for being denied the pleasure of going ashore. There was something on shore worth going to see: there was a bull-fight in Cadiz. But, behold! the commander advises me to go, and offers to take my place on the watch. I, not proud at all, accept. Therefore, behold again, I am at the show! It is decidedly a realization of the absurd, the impossible. Where were ever seen, even in fairy tales, commanders keeping guard for their officers so as to let them go to bull-fights? It is an absurdity and an impossibility!"

He was a witness, then, of that bloody spectacle, that butchery, the preparations for which inspired him with only an insurmountable disgust. But soon he was astonished to find himself captivated by curiosity, by dramatic emotion, and finally seized upon by the species of frenzy that carried away the entire assemblage.

"At sight of the first two horses horribly mangled, I was bathed with perspiration and my heart swelled in my breast; I would much rather have been at my post on the vessel. Yet, notwithstanding, I remained until eight o'clock in the evening. I saw eight bulls killed, ten horses disembowelled, and two picadors carried away half dead. If the combat had lasted twenty-four hours, I believe I would have stayed without food or drink. Finally—can you credit it?—at only the second bull I applauded the dexterous onsets both of the beast and of the men, I hooted at the awkward ones, and I called

for the dogs when the bull seemed to me too quiet. I said to myself: 'The horses are but worthless jades, which are brought to the circus to save the trouble of taking them to the slaughter-pens; as to the picadors, they are of about as much value as their steeds.' How well I understand now the prowess of the gladiators! How glorious it must have been to transport a whole people with admiration for one's skill, strength, and courage! What an intoxication of joy must have been such a victory and such applause in the full light of day! There was an unlucky matadore; in his place I would have let the bull kill me, or I would have killed him with a single blow.

"Ah! how much cruelty and folly are hidden and dormant in our hearts. Could I ever have believed that I would have felt and thought as I did at a bull-fight? Imagine, then, that you know yourself only until some similar test proves to you quite the contrary!

"Yet, in spite of the disagreeable revelation, I would return directly to see bulls killed, horses torn to pieces, and picadors bruised and crushed, or I would give a good deal not to have had a first glimpse of such spectacles."

At Tangier Clerc spent an evening with the French consul, who had invited for the occasion all his European colleagues. Our young officer danced, waltzed, and abandoned himself to a frank gayety, while at the same time carefully observing from the corner of his eye the cosmopolitan society, and making aside to himself piquant reflections on

the harmony that existed among the representatives of the different nations, thanks to the necessity of agreeing together if they did not want to *live like owls.*

Here is a shaft which he cannot refrain from lancing as he leaves Tangier : "We have shown this most amiable Emperor of Morocco the civility of transporting to Mogadore half a dozen little negroes, slaves and eunuchs destined for his harem, and we are going to Senegal to put down the slave-trade ! But, according to report, it is forbidden to capture, or even to see, a slave-ship. The result will enable me to affirm or deny the truth of this singular mission. I think that Mr. Billault's hubbub about his right of search is the cause of the presence of twenty-six Government vessels at this frightful station. If they occasionally sent all such spouters on a little hard service, I believe it would have a good effect. However, we must wait to see before we can be quite sure."

He did well not to decide about the matter prematurely. Some days later than the date of his writing, the *Caïman*, having encountered a slave-ship, performed its duty conscientiously. As to his bad humor about Mr. Billault and the negro-loving orators, obstinate as they were regarding the right of search which they talked about quite at their ease, it was very general among seamen, and other persons who thought they knew, to suspect English philanthropy of not being disinterested in claiming a right that was extremely onerous to the authorities of the French navy.

On the voyage he sketches the portraits of the ship's officers, whom generally he seems to like. The commander, Captain Rousse, is a Provençal already on the down-hill side of life and regretting a little the fig-trees and the olive-groves of his country-seat, but good, indulgent towards his inferiors, and very kindly disposed towards Ensign Clerc, to whom he teaches his profession. "Yesterday evening he held a long conversation with me and pointed out the best and worthiest means of preferment—that is to say, gave me a summary of all that it is useful to know, indicated the methods of studying and of profitably employing the knowledge gained. This showed experience and kind-heartedness. Thus you see, my dear father, I have fallen into good hands. It is true he makes profession of a very prosaic positivism; but" (Clerc adds wisely) "as he was led to this by the excesses of contrary sentiments, and as he is now a very good man, I congratulate myself upon having him for a master. The second in rank is Mr. Esmangard, the lieutenant, a man pleasing in his person and disposition. From the very first we impressed one another favorably, and if the devil does not interfere I shall one day have a friend in him."

And true enough, they became friends. If I am correctly informed, this young officer proclaimed himself as belonging to the school of Fourier, which then counted many members, as was evident in 1848. Clerc's conversion, which Esmangard was a witness of, left their affection the

same without bringing them nearer to one another in their religious beliefs.

Meanwhile Alexis did not lose his time; he reflected, he studied, sometimes mathematics, sometimes political economy, and oftener still religion; it was plain that the last was in reality his chief business.

One day he wrote to his brother Jules these singular lines; the embarrassment visible in them betrays the thought which possessed him and ruled him in spite of himself: "I have been twisting my pen in my fingers a quarter of an hour without daring to write a word. In fact, it's a great bore to talk always about one's self. I declare that if you do not send me back change (and with interest, too) for my gold piece, it's finished—I will write to you no more. This condition laid down, I now continue. The little time that is left from play, sleep, or work, I read J. B. Say and the 'Histoire des Variations.' They form a striking enough contrast; the one is occupied with only material goods, and never imagines that there are any others, and the other pays not the slightest attention to aught that is not spiritual. But there are books that one must be acquainted with; the only way to do is to pick out what is good in them and leave the rest. Then, besides, our profession obliges us to learn from books what you civilians learn in spite of yourselves. We must know what views to hold on the questions of *customs, commerce, manufactures, colonization, commercial treaties.* We may have to meddle in such matters,

and then it would be too late to begin to study them up; hence the mixture in which I have been stirring recently. It is now past midnight, and past my watch also. Good-night. I am going to take Bossuet; he has the privilege of keeping me company until I fall asleep."

Again taking his pen, he adds: "I make all sorts of efforts to become wiser and more religious; but it is difficult, and my stay in Paris helped to increase the obstacles. I hope that you are on the same road, and I do not doubt that you travel it more rapidly than I. I recommend to you Bossuet's 'Meditations' and 'Elevations'; they are two excellent books."

The two brothers had derived from the same sources the germ of religious indifference. But grace acted on their hearts simultaneously, and the hour approached when the joy felt by each on returning to God would be doubled by the return and the complete reconciliation of a well-beloved brother.

Shortly before arriving at Gabon Alexis wrote again to his father; we must read between the lines of this letter to guess what was passing in his soul.

"My Dear Father: We met this morning a poor devil of a slave-trader. We were sailing quietly towards Gabon. We kindled the fires, and an hour later the vessel received one of our boats.*

* The slaver was, therefore, captured, and the commander of the *Caïman* fulfilled his duty by preventing the transportation of the poor victims of the traffic.

The prize is about starting off again, and I shall confide this letter to it.

"You know very well, dear father, that it is only in romances that sailors lead an adventurous life. In reality, nothing is so uniform, so regular; it is almost a monastic life, and truly I have absolutely nothing to tell you, for there has nothing happened but the weather. But one may talk without saying anything. Well, then, I am in very good health; I am not tired, and I no longer feel that terrible need of Paris which tormented me so much hardly a year ago. This does not prevent me from desiring and regretting it, but it is not a suffering.

"I am always as comfortable as possible on this ship, yet, nevertheless, I want to leave it to go with Esmangard on a sailing vessel.

"The departure of the officer who commands our capture of this morning leaves me, after the lieutenant, the oldest officer on board, so that the next capture could, if I wished, put me off and consequently bring me back to France. What do you think of it? But we should not sell the bear's skin. . . .

"I hope to find letters at Gabon, where we shall be in a few days. As yet I have received none. In Paris they know not the good letters do a poor exile. You—you are not separated!

"Do you not think there was a sort of fatality in my embracing this mode of life? I am not complaining of it, I am almost as happy as possible; but it seems to me that there was something for-

eign to my will which urged me five years ago to decide for the sea. Five years! I have had to count it over several times. Yes, it is five years since I left you; five years! I am twenty-seven now. How quickly time passes even when one is unhappy! But past sorrow is a present joy; it is sweet to remember it.

"I am exerting all my efforts to become wise, my dear father—that is to say, religious, for there is no happiness outside of religion. I have great need of counsel; I am entirely deprived of it; I should find such excellent in France.

"I charge you, dear father, to embrace Jules for me—Jules, that good and honest man; tell him, without wounding his modesty, that I do not know where to find a heart as intelligent and as devoted as his. . .

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

"Farewell, dear father. I embrace you with all my heart; take care of yourself. If I only might wish you a rest! But you consider your work as a duty. We understand you, but we would rather have you live for yourself a little towards the end. Farewell, dear father!"

At last he saw Gabon, that new sort of a promised land, an arid and mountainous coast just on the equator. There, however, milk and honey flowed for him; there he tasted the joy of feeling himself at peace with God and with his own conscience, and when he quitted the African shore to return to France he had commenced a new life.

We have before us a letter to his brother, dated Wydah, January 25, 1847: "A missionary who took passage on the *Caïman* at Goree tells us that Wydah is a city of the powerful kingdom of Dahomey. The king of this country is celebrated in Guinea for his palace with its walls ornamented with human bones, and for his famous noble-guard composed of women armed *cap-à-pie* and possessed of invincible courage." *

In this letter, filled with warm expressions of affection, there is manifest the joy of the prodigal son restored to his father's favor. Alexis had just learned through friends who had written to him from Paris that his brother, touched like himself by grace, now fulfilled all the duties of a fervent Christian. He offers him the hearty congratulations of a man who knows the value of a sincere conversion and is on the way to an experience of it: "How far this kingdom is from that of the world! how it superabounds in goodness! how firm are its foundations! It has not been given me to witness your happiness, to associate myself with it; this joy is perhaps reserved for us; we will both pray for it."

Then, thinking of the innocence of his early childhood, guarded by a good and pious mother, it no longer appears to him as a reproach, but rather as a motive for hoping a great deal. What could

* Letter of Father Briot, missionary apostolic of the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary, to Father Libermann, superior of the same congregation ("Annals of the Propagation of the Faith," vol. xx. p. 324).

there be more touching than this cry of his heart at the moment when he feels himself being born again to faith and virtue : " We must both seek to join a poor, holy woman who from on high reaches her arms towards us. She calls us most certainly with all her might."

All his views of life are enlarged and embellished by the sight of the eternity to which he aspires, and he does not tire of blessing the infinite mercy which calls him, so guilty, to so great a happiness. " How happy I shall be if I am permitted to find myself with you once more ! What a happy change there will be in our companionship ! How unfortunate has been our wandering, and how much more unfortunate are they who have tried so hard to make what is so odious seem amiable ! What a clemency it is that has so long endured this pride and corruption ! How heavy is my account in all this ! "

The Christian virtues, which are sisters, have, all at the same time, taken possession of his soul : humility, mistrust of self, unlimited respect for the authority of the Church represented by her ministers, and a salutary fear of going astray through trusting too much to his own light.

He writes on the 1st of February : " I very much regret not being in Paris. I have the greatest need of advice. My life—it is my ardent desire—ought henceforth to follow new paths. I have not yet traced out the route. Communication with a pious and enlightened man would be to me, as a man and as a Christian, of the highest advantage. Solitude

may be profitable, but it may also be dangerous, and with my Latin Bible—which I perhaps misunderstand oftener than I am aware of—for my only conversation, I am exposed to many perils. I have continual fears and doubts, and, to say nothing of the thousand doctrinal errors into which I may fall daily without knowing it, I dare not impose upon myself certain obligations which might be useless or hurtful, and I am afraid not to impose them.

"St. Paul says we must be contented with the measure of grace granted to each one of us. I never know whether through a guilty ambition I desire to go beyond that, or whether through sloth I remain behind it.

"It may be that in a position so different from mine you will not understand these anxieties, and if so I congratulate you. I cannot help imagining that you enjoy the peace promised to men of good will. Still, I think this is not without some passing troubles. But I am happy when my thoughts rest upon you; it seems to me then that it is a reflection of your happiness which reaches me."

The change was complete and without relapse. How was it brought about? We were ignorant until quite recently, when we met a worthy witness of this great and consoling conversion. A spiritual son of the Rev. Father Libermann, a missionary of the Congregation of the Holy Heart of Mary, returned from Gabon, it appears as if expressly, to impart to us what we so greatly desired to know; having now gone back to his dear mission, he con-

tinues to evangelize the poor negroes of the African coast.

"O unhappy Guinea!" cried the venerated Father Libermann, "it seems to me that you are filling up my heart. The misfortunes of those poor souls oppress and overwhelm me." In the month of September, 1843, he had sent to Guinea seven missionaries, who landed at Cape Palmas on the 29th of the following November. Three of this number were soon carried off by fever or apoplexy, and the rest were dispersed by the fury of the negroes. It was to fill up those vacancies, or rather to commence anew so difficult an enterprise, that the Fathers Briot de la Mallerie and Leberre went on board the *Caïman* in the bay of Goree. Father Leberre, who alone has survived, and whom I saw during his stay in Paris, remembers very well Commander Rousse and his lieutenant, Mr. Esmangard, the intimate friend of Ensign Clerc. Esmangard was a Fourierite, and the other officers made profession of indifference or elsé of incredulity. After being some days at sea they began to argue with the missionaries. One of these, Father Briot de la Mallerie, had been in the navy, and this, added to his strong character, gave him some chance of being listened to. None lent a more attentive and more sympathetic ear to his discourse than the ensign, Alexis Clerc, who was always ready to respect convictions. One day, having himself engaged in the discussion, he suddenly braved his comrade Esmangard, and on the deck of the vessel, in presence of the entire staff

of officers and all the passengers, he made with a certain solemnity the following declaration : " After all, gentlemen, the principles which a Christian mother has instilled in the heart of her child are the ones which remain most deeply engraven there, and are also the ones which are the best."

" From that moment," continued the Rev. Father Laberre, " he seemed to enter on the true road of conversion. He asked Father Briot for a catechism, doubtless to refresh his memory on the principal truths of our holy religion, and to prepare himself to practise it. At the establishment of St. Mary in Gabon he made a general confession and received Holy Communion. Another officer belonging to the *Caïman* followed his example."

Finally a last revelation reaches us unexpectedly, and permits us to lay hold of Clerc in the height of the struggle, on the eve of his last combat, and yet again while he was still quivering from the agony he went through before gaining the great victory.

He had in the navy a Christian friend, Claude Joubert, a simple ensign, with whom he was intimate on the frigate *Charte,* which brought them both back to France after their first cruise in the southern seas. Since then Joubert had left the service, not to be idle, but with the thought of receiving Holy Orders and of one day consecrating himself to the labors of the apostolate. An apostle he already was, and he urged his beloved companion to no longer resist grace. For the rest, he was one of those sure friends to whom one may

confide everything. He died at twenty-nine years of age, a deacon, bearing to the tomb the secret of those intimate conversations which had caused him to see a *vessel of election* in that soul, still the slave of flesh and blood, that he strove to conquer to Jesus Christ. But he had preserved the letters he received from Gabon and other places, and behold! after thirty years they fall into our hands; they are full of light—of a light that illuminates the depth of the abyss whence our new convert escapes with a joy mingled with fear and astonishment.

Clerc wrote for the first time to his friend from "In sight of Gabon, December 8, 1846." After some details that would be of no interest to the reader, he says: "I come at last to thank you for your kind letter. How opportunely it arrived! how affectionate it is, and how it touches the exact spot where I feel my disease! O my dear friend! write to me often, even when you do not receive a reply. The great distance, you know, may be the cause of this, and I am very sorry to think that you have not written since the 30th of May, and that you will not write again until you have received this letter. Do not continue this plan, dear friend; the utility of your letters makes it your duty to send them to me frequently. Show me your heart, your struggles, your success. You are ahead of me in the good path; you owe me example and encouragement.

"I am on board the steam corvette *Caïman* at the station on the western coast of Africa. I am

also as happy as possible. The vessel is in perfect peace. I am on the best terms with the captain, and the lieutenant, who is named Esmangard, is my friend. The men are gently and justly governed by the lieutenant; he is an old friend of Desmarets. He has no faith; but I shall do so much, he has such good qualities. . . . He will receive it. My dear Joubert, it is idleness that is my enemy now. This tranquil happiness enervates me. I am tormented, nevertheless I do not rest in my idleness without remorse, but I do not find strength to will to overcome it; I am always in this cruel *dilemma** of not daring to frame for myself a rule of conduct, for fear that it might be extravagant, or that I would follow it only through pride, and of wishing to frame one so that my efforts to be good may be rewarded. I need assistance; I am abandoned, am without direction. I beg of you make me a rule; I promise you I will follow it exactly. . . . You pity such weakness, but it is my state. Human respect also restrains me. If I were sure of persevering I would not mind it; but I am so weak that I fear a thousand falls, and my ostensible efforts would then appear ridiculous. Moreover, nowadays people pretend to be pious through ambition, and I would die of shame if a fault, alas! only too probable, should justify the opinion that I had been looking out for an epaulette among the missionaries. All this is very trifling, is it not? But it is just so with me.

*We leave this word, although it is improperly used.—*Author.*

You see I have need of you. I will pray, and perhaps to-morrow I will have strength to go to the missionaries. But send me all the same a rule to follow, one compatible with my profession. Jesus Christ has promised to be where two or three are gathered together in his name. . . . But I—I seek him alone; will he come? Perhaps I am wandering in the paths of pride instead of advancing on the road of charity."

The first confidences of our young sailor stop here; they reveal all the hesitations of his will in view of a duty that he regards as certain, and that he would be happy to fulfil if he were more sure of himself. He continued in this state a long time; it might have been feared that grace, after having vainly knocked at the door of his heart, would grow weary and abandon him to a false and fatal security. But no, it will not be thus; God is watching over that soul that is really generous but sleeping, and he will not deprive himself of the glory it will render him when once it is for ever attached to his service.

The entire month passes, and Clerc, returning from Gabon, again writes to his friend:

"JANUARY 11, 1847.

"MY DEAR JOUBERT: Just as I wrote the last word of the preceding sheet I heard a boat being got ready. . . . I do not know if I had any merit in it, but without stopping to consult myself I made my escape to the shore. I went to the priests and I confessed on the 11th of December. I received absolution almost moment for moment twenty-

seven years after my birth, * and the same day we sailed. Congratulate me; a difficult step is taken, and it was perhaps your letter which decided me. I have since made great efforts to live well, but you know how hard it is and how much we need help. Still, at sea one is removed from many dangers; the senses are in an almost unnatural drowsiness. Truly man is like a stone on the top of a mountain; it is firm on its base, but if it is moved little by little, and at last after great exertions made to roll over once, it will continue to roll of itself, slowly at first; perhaps it might then be possible to stop it; but soon its course is impetuous; no obstacles can arrest it; it passes over them with prodigious bounds which augment its velocity yet more; it bruises, it drags after it all it encounters; it precipitates itself as with an ever-increasing fury even into the depths of the abyss. O Joubert! let my lamentable experience serve you as an example; may it be one to me! I feel that I have not the strength meanwhile to resist such a trial as my imagination pictures; I pray earnestly for help, and I endeavor to distract my mind from those phantoms.

"A youth passed in all sorts of excesses is a very great misfortune. You have no knowledge of those phantoms which have so long pursued me; I owe it only to God's grace that I am less frequently be-

* Clerc thought he was born on the 11th of December, and that is the day he had inscribed in the Catalogue of the Province of France as the date of his birth. But we see from the registry of his baptism, and from his record of service, that he was born on the 12th.

set by them. When I cast my eyes behind me I am soon obliged to withdraw my gaze. What I ask oftenest and most earnestly of God is to have a horror of evil, to weep over my past; I have not yet obtained it.

"You see, my dear Joubert, how worthy of pity my condition is. It seems to me that if it were necessary to die for my salvation I would not hesitate, yet I live with apprehension. What a creature man is! It is easier, then, for him to sacrifice his life than to deny his passions. Solitude is often fatal, society almost always so. Would you believe that it is impossible for me to spend one day without speaking ill of somebody? I know how strongly evil-speaking is forbidden, but it is so common a topic that one must condemn one's self to an absolute silence to avoid falling into it.

"I cannot understand charity. I do not know how to love a man filled with faults; it is difficult to detest the faults and to love the man who delights in them. The remedy would be to judge nobody, but that is still more impracticable. I search diligently, but I cannot find in myself any possible solution of the problem. How can we avoid judging actions which strike us, sentiments which people take pleasure in revealing to us? I know that I am myself full of faults, that I cherish a multitude of guilty sentiments in which I delight, but this does not influence my judgment of others; certainly if I had to condemn, it would render me indulgent, and I think I would never condemn.

But not to judge and think: *that is good* or *that is bad*, is beyond me—I cannot help it; neither can I help thinking: *that man is bad, sensual, dishonest*, etc. Oh! if the yoke is easy and the burden light, it is also very true that the road is rough and narrow."

Finally, on the 20th of January, before sealing his letter, Clerc added these few words: "I take advantage of an unexpected opportunity of sending you this letter, but it leaves a crowd of things still unsaid. Since the 11th I have received letters from France. God's hand is revealing itself to me, dear Joubert. My brother has returned to the bosom of the Church and has communicated. . . . I have had a fit of the most intense aversion for the sea. I am unsettled. If this continuance of aversion is a sign from God to quit the profession, I am ready; but I do not want to quit it as a coward —that is to say, from human motives. Enlighten me, and pray for me.

"Adieu, dear and faithful friend! Pray for an unfortunate who is very often shaken by circumstances, and much tormented by his own heart. I embrace you. A. C."

It was something admirable; being once entered on that narrow way which he had approached but with fear and trembling, Clerc did not again fall back, as he had so much dreaded, and as had seemed inevitable to him when he considered only his own weakness of which he had had, still quite recently, a sad but final experience. The dangerous images of his past, the odious phantoms which

haunted him, vanished in the light of the Sun of Righteousness, and with unspeakable joy he recognized the truth of the divine Master's words: "Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall have rest to your souls. For my yoke is sweet and my burden light" (St. Matt. xi. 28–30).

CHAPTER III.

ALEXIS' PROGRESS IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE—SERVICE ON SHORE—L'ORIENT, INDRET, BREST.

RETURNED to France in the summer of 1847, Alexis is another man; his old companions, witnesses of so unexpected a transformation, do not in the least understand it and cannot believe their eyes. Is it some strange eccentricity? Is it a jest, a wager? Is he truly in his right senses, and how long will it last?

But he declares to them that it is a very serious matter, and that, with the grace of God, he will never change again. His neophyte's fervor recalls the cry of Polyeucte on coming forth from his baptism:

"Allons, mon cher Néarque, allons aux yeux des hommes
Braver l'idolâtrie et moutrer qui nous sommes."*

Alas! in the Paris of the nineteenth century the cry, I am a Christian! still astonishes many pagan ears and excites the rage of persecutors; and Clerc was one day to learn something of this. Meanwhile he passed for a fool, or at least for a great singularity, among people who had seen him as much a stranger as themselves to all religious

*Let us go, my dear Nearchus, let us go in the sight of men to defy idolatry and show who we are.

thoughts. In his eyes the folly was in *not* believing in Jesus Christ and in *not* walking in his footsteps; he explained himself on the subject with a sharpness of expression well suited to disconcert those to whom his new mode of life appeared unreasonable, and who came to sound his dispositions with more of malicious curiosity than of interest and sympathy.

On one occasion he was met by an old companion, since become captain of a frigate and an assistant professor at the Polytechnic School; a man of much spirit, but a sceptic and greatly puzzled at such a change. "What is this report, my dear Clerc, about your having turned Jesuit?" Clerc was not yet a Jesuit, but we know what the word means on the lips of those who are not even Christians. "Yes, of course * I have, as every man of heart and intelligence would if he were not an ignoramus." This was his answer, and "Clerc's tone, gesture, and eyes were such that I saw there was no chance for discussion; I left him, promising myself never to return."

If he had always answered in this manner he would not have effected many conversions. Fortunately, in time he acquired more control of himself, not without effort, but with a merit as much greater as this slightly rude frankness was natural to his character.

He had a little circle of friends in Paris to whom his conversion, so long waited for, was a subject of

* *Of course* is not in the original.—*Author.*

much joy. The best of these was his brother Jules, who became at the same time as himself a fervent Catholic. Both brothers had from childhood been friends with a valiant writer who had early consecrated his pen to the triumph of religion, and whose home was radiant with the loveliest virtues united in the person of a distinguished wife whom God had brought to a knowledge of his law by extraordinary ways. Mr. and Madame de S—— (discretion forbids us to name them more plainly) were friends in the fullest sense, and as they followed the inspirations of faith in everything, they celebrated in the holiest manner, by joining him at the sacred banquet, the return of this prodigal son to his Father's house.

Mr. Jules Clerc had confided the care of his soul to the Abbé de la Bouillerie, then Vicar-General of Paris, and since successively Bishop of Carcassonne and Coadjutor of Bordeaux. But one of the brothers could not have a friend or a guide who was not also the friend and guide of the other ; therefore, after a short stay in Paris which sufficed to acquaint him with the value of such a friendship, Alexis testified for the Abbé de la Bouillerie the same affection and filial confidence as if he had always been his spiritual son.

He was not inclined to forget the faithful Joubert, his first guide and his model in the generous accomplishment of all the obligations of Christianity. What had become of that dear companion, of whom he had not heard since his departure from Gabon ? He did not know, but supposed he was

still with his family at Pont-de-Vaux* (Department of Ain). It was there that he addressed a letter to him on the 27th of August, 1847, being himself at Lorient and still on the *Caïman*, for he had spent but a very short time in Paris :

"All my efforts now tend to becoming Christian and to loving God very much. I ought not to talk to you of my efforts, because, in truth, I am very inert, without either courage or perseverance. I am like a ship disabled, but God, who has been so good as to recall me to himself, will make this poor hulk drift towards the surest port. But I should aid myself according to my means, and I do very little. I must tell you what he has done for me lately. You know me, dear friend, and you know that I have a restless nature, active enough, not profound at all, and tolerably inconstant. You know also what this life on shipboard is—unoccupied and trifling, leaving the whole day for idle dreaming. I was very uneasy about being in such a life, especially with the privation of a church added to it. I believe that it is really dangerous. During our last voyage I kept a sort of diary, wrote almost every day all my disquietudes, all my fears, and all my thoughts, so that I think I made a pretty exact likeness of myself. My plan was to give the manuscript to some priest, who might from reading it be able immediately to advise and help me. The life we sailors lead is so uncertain that it is

* Pont-de-Vaux was the native place of General Joubert, and our Claude Joubert was one of the nephews of that illustrious soldier.

prudent for us to get the start of opportunities. But it was necessary to find a priest. My brother sent me to see his director. I did not wait to consider; I gave him my papers, and the good God has permitted me to find him one of the best and most intelligent of men. He is the Abbé de la Bouillerie, the first vicar of the Archbishop of Paris. I did not know him at all, and I could not have made a better choice. He inspires me with as much affection as respect. I only regret that, busy as he is, I must increase his burden of cares; yet I take a kind of egotistical pleasure in being allowed to.

"I do not feel in a mood to talk to you any longer now. Consider this as a mere announcement of my arrival. Inform me of all that concerns you, and rely upon my haste in answering your letter. I am at present at Lorient on board the *Caïman*.

"I need a great deal of help. I recommend myself to your prayers. A. C."

When this letter reached Joubert he had already said good-by to the world, and was residing no longer with his family, but at the Seminary of Issy near Paris; he had commenced at Issy the studies which, continued the following year at the Seminary of St. Sulpice, were to prepare him for the reception of holy orders. We may judge of his joy at seeing Clerc so well started on the right road. Clerc had begun his letter by saying: "You contributed to my conversion. I shall never forget you." To inform his beloved comrade of the suc-

cessful issue of his vocation, to talk to him of the happiness of retreat, of the spiritual delights of the seminary life, of his venerated directors, of his new studies, which nourished his soul while enlightening his mind, and were in this so different from the proud science of the world; then to make it a duty to find for him at Lorient a new guide, if possible another Abbé de la Bouillerie—such was the first inspiration of Claude Joubert, and he succeeded in it all beyond his hopes. We would here say a word in praise of this holy young man, of whom the Seminary of St. Sulpice had but a glimpse; his memory has not entirely disappeared from there, and one of the present directors,* who was his fellow-seminarian, tells us that if he had lived he would certainly have made a zealous priest. Humble, modest, reserved, perfectly faithful to the rules, he spoke little of his past, and it was scarcely known in the circle of his intimate companions that he had had the experience of a cruise in the Southern seas.

In the beginning of September, Clerc, at last off the *Caïman*, was attached to the Superintendence of the port of Lorient. It was his first station on the coast of Brittany. During the three years following he had no fixed residence, his duties calling him by turns to Brest, to Saint Nazaire, to Paimbœuf, and to Indret, not to speak of several short voyages on the *Caffarelli*, the *Caravane*, and the *Duguesclin*. The reader would take little in-

† The Abbé Sire.

terest in accompanying the young officer in these different wanderings. The special service in which he was employed on the steamer *Pélican* is of a little more consequence, and we shall have a word to say about it at the proper time. The great advantage which he found in these various situations was having time to recollect himself, and to devote himself, undistracted by worldly matters, to prayer, study, and good works.

A letter, dated Lorient, September 17, 1847, and addressed to his brother Jules, puts before our eyes, so to speak, the first effort of his zeal, and shows us a discernment not at all to be expected from so inexperienced a missionary, It relates to a friend—we will call him Alphonse—whom his brother and Mr. de S——, together with himself, were laboring to bring back to the right path, and to whom they had recommended Pascal's "Pensées" and La Bruyère's chapter on "Les Esprits Forts." Alexis disapproved the choice of this reading, which he judged would produce but little effect, and he endeavored to gain his two auxiliaries to his view of the case.

"It is very true that Pascal's 'Pensées' which first opened the way to me, and the chapter on 'Les Esprits Forts' which I read shortly after, are books I regard as very good and very forcible, which I have no intention of attacking, and which, on the contrary, I am ready to defend. But the 'Pensées' are difficult of comprehension, and, it seems to me, would make no impression on a mind that was not reflective. And I believe that,

taking in a mass those of them which Alphonse would read and understand, those he would read without understanding, and those he would not read at all, and regarding the impulse that now animates him, the whole would form a very foggy cloud, which would flee away behind him without his so much as glancing at it once again. The chapter on 'Les Esprits Forts,'—I agree that he will be able to read it through without skipping; it is malicious and vivacious enough to interest him. But, thank God! Alphonse cannot be placed in La Bruyère's category of strong minds.

"Alphonse is neither a strong mind nor a sceptic. Alphonse—and you can tell him so from me—belongs to none of the philosophical categories. His philosophy consists in having no philosophy, because philosophy is a bore, and his chief business is to be bored as little as possible. Do not address yourself to his mind to convince it; it is already convinced. The only thing is, he does not want to think of the matter, and he succeeds tolerably well. Supposing that you should convince him, have you not seen him a hundred times perfectly convinced, fully decided upon a resolution which he has not even tried to put in practice? But tell him, and repeat it over and over again, that if he is without force, strength, there is a way to acquire it, that he must ask for it. He knows where the good is, but he has not strength to desire it. Tell him to ask for that strength. It is not his mind he must conquer; it is his passions. Be persistent in inducing him to

make little sacrifices; help him when he does well, encourage him; do not leave him long to himself. Say nothing of what there may be, at the commencement, sad in religion; be as gay and as agreeable as possible; let him see that religion has sweet joys, permitted pleasures; and take special care to pay him, as far as you can, with a reward for every sacrifice you obtain from him. Finally, let him feel that to become a Christian is not to die. You will accomplish nothing with argumentative blows; you will do everything by attentions, by persistence, and by making him feel the sweetness of lawful pleasures. In conclusion, my dear Jules, remind him of what I told him to engrave on his memory.

"I cannot conceal from you that I consider your task a very heavy one; but you have good courage, and God will assist you.

"I say all this not to vex you, which I would not for the world. If you are not convinced that I am right about the matter, there is always for a consulter that unfortunate Abbé de la Bouillerie who made in us acquaintances very fatal to his peace and quiet."

Alexis' letter to his brother Jules terminates with the following recommendation:

"I ought to have spoken to you of an old friend of mine, an old pupil of the Polytechnic School and a midshipman with me on board the *Charte*, who has laid aside the cuirass and taken up the hair-cloth. This worthy young fellow is at St. Sulpice, and I knew nothing about it. I much regret not having

seen him, and I commission you to make his acquaintance; I think it will be an advantage to you. His name is Claude Joubert. He will be at Issy, at the seminary, until the 10th of October, and after that date at the Seminary St. Sulpice in Paris. You will oblige me by delivering my letter to Joubert yourself."

These are the contents of Alexis' letter to his old comrade:

"I was severely punished for my delay in writing to you by being ignorant that I could see you while I was in Paris. The occasions of our meeting will perhaps be so rare that I deeply regret the one I have let slip. It is sweet to me, it would have been useful to me to see you in peace and at study. You have worked a good deal; the numerous quotations in your letter prove this. What a charming work that must be which initiates us into such grand sentiments, into such grand ideas! And are we not to be pitied for having so long worn ourselves out with working at useless things? My dear Joubert, you have preceded me in the narrow way; you have had the happiness of breaking with the world; be sure to always remember and pity me. I am very often afraid of seeking to serve *two masters* at once; I wish I could be able once and for ever to reject the tyrant and keep the father. I wish the impossible, . . . the binding of my will irrevocably to the good. Living in the world, temptations may present themselves in so many expected or unexpected ways that we need still more help from God to save us from falling;

and yet in the activity of our life how difficult it is to find the recollection of prayer! The danger is especially great, it seems to me, because it is composed of many very little dangers which we do not sufficiently dread, and our negligence in avoiding them causes us to fall into a state of languor wherein we no longer feel the help of grace, and are no longer worthy of it. Conversation particularly is a snare of this sort, especially to talkative persons whose petty vanity enjoys intensely the success of a well-said and well-placed word. Those who love to hear themselves talk and who are willingly listened to, are very apt to talk nonsense.

"I believe I told you how useful the letter I received from you at Gabon was to me. Your last also arrived very opportunely; let this encourage you not to be lazy about writing. I made haste to find the Abbé Stévant; I spent nearly two hours with him, and the time was well employed. Please thank the Abbé Pinault* for the excellent acquaintance he has procured me. I know Father Pinault by name through a little scientific dispute which Bertrand† had with him on the subject of a chapter of his 'Treatise on the Differential Calculus.' I am very grateful to him for being interested in my conversion, and for the service he has just rendered me, and I ask of him the per-

*Director at the Seminary of Issy. He was a distinguished mathematician, formerly professor of the University and master of the conferences at the Superior Normal School.

†Mr. Joseph Bertrand, now one of the perpetual secretaries of the Academy of Sciences.

mission, of which I shall avail myself when God wills, to call to thank him in person.

"The Abbé Stévant appears to well deserve the title of 'holy priest' which you give him. It is touching to see these men of God blot out their personality so completely that they never speak of themselves directly or indirectly; they belong entirely to others; one might say that their souls could not go to be united to God, except they were carried by those they have aided, encouraged, and guided to a happy end. This is by way of telling you that I was most cordially received. I was just then in great perplexity, and, thanks to Abbé Stévant, I am relieved of it. He seemed to me, on that point which I found difficult, not less intelligent and enlightened than kind and devoted.

"I got him to describe to me a day at Saint Sulpice. He is overflowing with pleasant memories of that house, and regards the days he spent there as the happiest of his life. You also tell me that you have never tasted so much happiness. I believe full well that what I know of it is indeed happiness, but I must congratulate you on receiving strength to bear up under so prolonged a strain on the mind. A single hour of rest during the day would be insufficient amid such serious and difficult studies, if you had not the advantage of finding in your frequent visits to the chapel refreshment and assistance *to temper* you again, as Abbé Stévant expresses it. It is a great happiness to pray from the fulness of one's heart, to be impatient at being prevented from praying, not to

have to oblige one's self to pray by saying: 'It is the hour; I must pray.' To know how to pray is to pray with attraction, to pray with love. We must love in order to pray, we must pray in order to love—it is a veritable circle; it has neither beginning nor end, and we cannot move around it unless we have received a good initial impulse to determine our motion, and unless we experience the centripetal force that makes us describe it. . . . My comparison is not a very happy one, but it is very certain that we can neither love nor pray unless God gives us the power. The whole thing is perhaps the history of the ten talents which in the hands of the diligent steward increased a hundred-fold. At first we receive grace to pray a little, and if we make good use of our capital we gain power to love a little more, and consequently to pray better, and so on. Oh! to love God is the great thing."

Clerc still feared at this time to be overcome by despair if he should have the misfortune of falling again into his old faults; he frankly acknowledges this to his friend, while promising to remember that in the most extreme cases there always remains to the sinner a plank of salvation. Finally he speaks of his studies; he has undertaken to read St. Thomas of Aquin. "It is difficult for me, less because it is written in Latin than on account of its being full of the philosophy of Aristotle, of which I am perfectly ignorant. But I shall succeed in going through it, I hope.

"To conclude," he adds, "I announce to you

that I have engaged my brother Jules to call upon you. I am sure you will be pleased with him; it is not possible to find a better creature; he helps everybody, loves everybody, and forgets only himself; he is a good Christian, of a rather fresh date like myself, but he has nicely improved his time. His is a simple and upright heart; I do not think he is very philosophical, but he loves God and his neighbor a great deal. As for me, I find that he loves me a little too well.

"I shall soon be deprived of Abbé Stévant, who starts for Rennes Sunday morning.

"If you want to know about my position, my brother will tell you. Adieu. A. C."

At Lorient Clerc found another comrade, Mr. C——, belonging also to the navy, but who at that time in his religious ideas was where our new convert was when he left the Polytechnic School.

"He came to see me," said Mr. C——, when we asked for his reminiscences, "to resume, or rather to begin, our acquaintance. At the very first he told me of his conversion. The news was so unexpected that I did not believe it, taking it for some pleasantry or jest, the point of which I could not understand. At last, however, I was convinced that he spoke seriously. From our professional relations there soon sprang sympathy and friendship, and we spent together till the close of 1847 several very agreeable months which I have always liked to remember."

The reader will guess that he who speaks thus is now a Christian. He attributes the happy change

to his friend's influence in a great degree. But his conversion was only completed much later, and we shall see with what ingenious zeal, with what passionate ardor, Clerc was still laboring for it, without ever losing courage, several years after his entrance into the Society of Jesus.

Mr. C—— introduces us to the solitary and studious life in which Clerc found such pleasure at Lorient, and which must have seemed very unnatural to those who were acquainted with his social character and his old habits of dissipation. "I had rented," this faithful witness tells us, "in common with another friend, a little house and garden in a suburb of Lorient. After the business of the day was over we were accustomed to go there to spend a few hours and breathe the fresh air. Clerc, being added to our society, found the garden pleasant, and, having no active service just then, he installed himself in the little house. There he devoted all his time to meditation and study. To our great astonishment he read the "Summa" of St. Thomas from morning till night; but for all that he did not show himself less gay or less amiable when we went out to pass a few hours with him. I greatly admired his virtue, his firm convictions, his aspirations towards the good, and his contempt for the things of this world. Notwithstanding that, all the efforts he made to win us over did not in the least succeed, and despite our affection for him, and the harmony of our intercourse, we considered him a little cracked. The summer ended, winter came, and we returned to the city; we continued

to spend our evenings together. Clerc was always gay and charming, I fearless and earnest in discussing all that either nearly or remotely concerned religion; therefore we had opportunities of reproaching his intolerance and refusing to take his sermons seriously. But his gayety and good nature always prevented any bitter feeling among us."

What did these little railleries matter to Clerc? He would have borne many more for the cause which he loved; and, besides, he knew how to regard the dispositions of his friends. A glance at his own past sufficed to teach him not to despair of those who put themselves on the defensive, and are even tolerably aggressive, as soon as they are spoken to about religion.

The reader has remarked this fact: Clerc already studied the "Summa" of St. Thomas. With what object? Had he then, scarcely converted, ideas of an ecclesiastical vocation? Oh! no; he did not look so far ahead, and he would have been greatly surprised if any one had told him that he would one day be sitting on the benches of a theological school. But this is what was in his mind: Having become a Christian, and this seriously, he deemed it quite natural, if not necessary, to give the first place in the cultivation of his mind to the most beautiful and the most important of all sciences—the one which has for its object God and the soul, our duties here below, the assistance God gives us to fulfil them, and the reward he reserves for our fidelity. But how should he learn that science of which he felt himself so ignorant even

after the serious readings that had led the way to his conversion? Preoccupied with this thought one day—it was before he left Paris—he met an ecclesiastic in the street. He immediately approached him, and, lifting his hat, said: "Pardon, reverend sir; allow me just one word in passing. Be good enough to tell me the name of the author who has written the best on religion." "St. Thomas Aquinas," was the reply. "And in which work, if you please?" "In his 'Theological Summa.'" "Thank you a thousand times." Clerc again saluted the priest, and made all haste to procure the "Summa" of St. Thomas.

At first he found it pretty difficult reading; his university philosophy had poorly prepared him to understand that grand and profound scholastic. However, he did not allow himself to be discouraged, and little by little he familiarized himself with a language and a method so novel to him.

This may seem strange, but it was his way, and all who have ever lived with him will recognize him by this characteristic. Moreover, we are giving here the personal recollections of a venerable priest who was his director the following year, and who adds, speaking with a full knowledge of his subject: "That diligent study of St. Thomas was later of great use to him in the conversions he undertook, and in which it was my privilege to cooperate."

It was no easy matter to induce his father to accept this new direction of his ideas, and especially these excursions into the domain of theology, a

country which he esteemed to be peopled with chimeras, and knew only through the descriptions given sometimes by the fine writers of the *Siècle*, in which his confidence was extreme.

Mr. Clerc enquired if his son did not intend to resume his plan, pursued before his voyage to Gabon, of entering Public Instruction, or at least of securing admittance to that career by taking the degree of doctor of sciences. Called upon to explain himself, Alexis did so with his usual frankness: "You have asked me, dear father, if I purpose carrying out the plan I started on two years ago of having myself dubbed a doctor. I think no more about it. You know that there remained for me, in order to receive the degree, to propose and sustain a thesis; therefore I shall neither gain nor lose anything by letting the project rest just where it is as long as I desire, and I am not anxious to pursue it. Many of the reasons that urged me no longer exist. I no longer propose to leave the navy, and I should do so regretfully if circumstances almost obliged me. Do you remember when I was with Mr. de S—— ?* I tried all sorts of trades, and found in each such difficulties that I abandoned it directly; it is just the same with the one I have now, but the next would be the same too. Decidedly, instead of changing a condition to find one to suit his character better, it is more reasonable in a man when he is already fixed to accommodate himself to circumstances. It is

*Not the intimate friend designated by the same initial. This gentleman was the head of an institution.

the deceitful hope of a happiness that does not exist which is the source of so much useless agitation. You will, perhaps, think me ridiculous enough to consider as a fortunate discovery of mine these good, plain truths, which are so simple as to almost belong to common sense. However, I did not find them out all alone; they are among the happy secrets I have learned the past year.

"Why should I not speak to you openly? Since a year ago I am a devotee; for the space of a year I have made it my whole study to learn and practise our religion. Having so much of my time unoccupied by my duties as a sailor, I consider that I am under obligations to instruct myself in this most important matter; and this, my dear father, is why the *x*'s are left perfectly tranquil, and why I live with huge worm-eaten Latin books of the Middle Ages. I do not tell you that this is very attractive; no, it is even sometimes very wearisome; but all sciences are the same—the elements of them are tedious. Nevertheless I love this study, and it has already afforded me more pleasure than all the others I have pursued."

Thus, ideas of faith, the sentiment of duty fulfilled without pleasure or attraction, fixed him in his career of a sailor—a career to which we shall see him growing more and more attached with an austere and disinterested love, until the day when he will feel himself imperiously called to a holier vocation. Ruled by this sentiment of faith, he will persevere in the studies he has undertaken, not

only while his service on shore assures him abundant leisure, but also during those remote expeditions when the cares of a commander would have sufficed him for occupation if he had not had the matter so much at heart. In fact, the "Summa" of St. Thomas of Aquin had become his nightly companion. Twenty years later it was worth while hearing him talk of the Angelic Doctor. With the understanding of his doctrine, attraction, liking, had come, then enthusiasm; his admiration was not cooled by being enlightened, and nothing equalled his respect for the decisions of that prince of theologians.

Meanwhile the reading of St. Thomas, engaging as it had become for him, did not make him lose his ground in other things; far from that, he took more interest than before in his profession of a sailor, and if he happened to meet among his fellows or his superiors an officer of merit from whom there was good reason to expect great usefulness in the service of his country, he was so delighted that he could scarcely contain himself. He had this good fortune the following year (1848) on board the *Caffarelli*, a ship which, notwithstanding its favorable record, had to be put under repair on account of certain faults of construction. The *Caffarelli*, a steam frigate, was subject to the orders of Commander Mallet, a friend and relative of Madame Pagès, and consequently well disposed towards our ensign, who had from earliest childhood been intimate with the Pagès family. But there was among the officers of the *Caffarelli*

another who gained Alexis' esteem and affection at the very first. As this officer has since fully corresponded to the promise he gave while as yet only captain of a corvette, we will copy from a confidential correspondence a few lines that refer to him, judging that they will not be without interest, or even profit, to men of the same profession who may chance to read them :

" We have on board the *Caffarelli* a real gem. He is the Captain (of a corvette) Didelot, now acting as lieutenant-commander ; * one of those men of upright, keen, and strong character who join to their intrinsic worth a gift of fascination which nobody can resist. As soon as one knows them one esteems and loves them. As the ship is and will be managed by him, it is a real happiness for us to have him. I will give you an example of the way he understands the service. You know that on a Government vessel each division of the labor is under the special direction of an officer. One has the artillery, another the rigging, a third the helm ; the care of the hull and the arrangement of the supplies belong to another. My lot on the *Caffarelli* is the engine. On many vessels things are fixed so only in name, and in reality it is the lieutenant commander who does all the work. On other vessels each officer attends to his charge in obedience to the orders of the commander and the lieutenant. It is so on our ship. There would be nothing unusual in this if the lieutenant

* Admiral Baron Didelot is now President of the Board of Naval Works.

commander had not asked me for a plan of appointing the men for the engine, a plan for the use of the engine itself, and a plan of a journal of the engine. It is very clear that this does not bind him to anything, and that he will do in these different respects whatever he pleases; but it is also clear that if he judges and decides questions, as is his right and duty, he does it only after having considered the suggestions he may receive from all quarters. The officers will naturally be led to take interest in the general welfare, since they have been consulted as to its direction. This is in my opinion an intelligent method of acting which cannot be in the least prejudicial to authority, and the result of which will be the improvement of the thing itself and the satisfaction of the officers."

It seems to us that this is not bad reasoning, and that our ensign was being well prepared for a wise and firm exercise of authority. Thus was being formed in him the accomplished sailor, the skilful officer understanding both men and his profession, while he was at the same time growing daily into the perfect Christian whose only ambition was to live and die for Jesus Christ.

Let us look through his letters to his brother Jules, letters in which he poured out his soul, thus leaving us unconsciously a picture of his interior and a history of his spiritual life; in this way we will assist at his progress in the practice of Christian perfection, and may we profit by his generous example, as well as by the precious counsels which the tenderest and most devoted fraternal

friendship inspired him to give when the opportunity offered.

His brother had suffered some (I know not what) wholly unexpected disappointment that had greatly disturbed his soul. Alexis congratulates him on this trial, which he regards as a mark of God's favor, but he amicably blames him for not having had recourse at the very first to the true physician and the true remedy : " When we find ourselves in your case, and when all possible efforts have been made ; when we fail by the result of circumstances quite beyond our control ; when we have used to the utmost all human means, it is Almighty God who has decided the matter. We must gracefully submit ; there is even real cause to congratulate ourselves that he has deigned to try us, for he exactly proportions the crown of triumph to the difficulty of the combat. The only thing to be regretted is that you did not go immediately to the Abbé de la Bouillerie, who would very soon have consoled you. A man does not go to the doctor when he is well, and it is especially when he is not at peace with himself that he should seek the ministers of peace. If we went to them only when we were perfectly joyful we would never go. If we avoid the priests in our soul-diseases, it is either because we are ashamed to manifest them or we hope to cure ourselves better alone. All these are snares which we must guard against. I do not tell you this because I regard your silence towards Abbé de la Bouillerie as a very grave fault, I tell it only in a general way. As is my custom, I seize by the hair all oppor-

tunities of preaching. I know well that you have been pressed by a thousand different matters, and that you have not had leisure to look well into your heart. And then you are afraid of troubling Abbé de la Bouillerie. . . . This last is not common sense, first because Abbé de la Bouillerie loves you deeply and you do not annoy him, and secondly because if even you should annoy him he would very quickly tell you that he is not at his post to be amused, and that he would prefer that you should visit him too often rather than not often enough."

Behold the idea he had already formed of the sacred ministry and of the duties it imposes! Let us say it to the honor of the French clergy that it is thus regarded by all good priests, and they are not rare, thank God! Clerc had experience of this during the whole time he spent on the coast of Brittany; everywhere he met excellent priests, who were at the same time the fathers of his soul and his devoted friends, and it is owing to the kindness of several of them whom we did not apply to in vain, that we have been able to discover here and there traces of our hero in spite of his frequent changes of residence occasioned by the necessities of the service.

About that time, probably in 1848, he made a retreat at La Trappe de la Meilleraie, and it was doubtless there that the possibility of a sacerdotal vocation began for the first time to dawn upon him. At least we infer this from his reflections upon *the choice of a state of life* in a letter to his brother, whose future was not yet entirely fixed.

"My dear Jules, the choice of a career is one of the most important things a man can be called upon to do. Very few persons have it in their power to exchange one for another. Yet it is generally very seldom that a man is satisfied with the one chosen at first; I will say more, it is seldom that he has reason to be. And if the career you have embraced is not suitable for you, you are vowed to unprofitable tribulations without alleviation and without result. Let us put aside all that arises from a fickle disposition or from exaggerated desires of happiness. The cause of these bad selections is that we make them without God. Instead of weighing the pecuniary advantages, the harmonies with our taste and capacity, vain and fleeting things! we should have no other object in view save the supreme one, our eternal life. This life is but the portal, the other is the temple. If, ridding ourselves of all ambitious desires, of all desire of fortune, of all self-pleasing, we regard our career as the way by which we are to go to God, as the means of pleasing him in this life, of lending ourselves to the part he has imposed upon us, and which we must perform with hearty good-will in order to carry out the harmony of his eternal plans; and if, in our ignorance of what this part is, we beg him with confidence and submission to make it known to us, he will certainly do so. My good Jules, you and I have acted differently, and many others with us. Therefore our choice is certainly bad, not perhaps because we both of us have an employment other than the one God intended for

us, for it is in his providence to use even the depraved will of man for his perfect ends, and it belongs to him to draw good out of evil itself; but our choice is bad on account of the motives which determined us to it."

After entering into certain considerations entirely personal, he concludes by exhorting his brother to serve God at any cost, and to ask of him the means of succeeding in doing this. "This is all, and the rest is nothing. I do not need to tell you that no matter with what energy we search for happiness, we will not find it outside of God. His purpose will always be accomplished, whether we desire it or no; all our wisdom, all our merit, consists in conforming our will to his. If, after having earnestly implored his light, this project grows upon you more and more; if, especially, the supernatural motives that may urge you to it increase; if you feel that you will be obeying the voice of God, do not hesitate a moment, and enter with confidence upon your new career. If these precious motives do not influence you, you will undertake a business not bad perhaps, but indifferent. If, finally, they are in opposition to your new ideas, and yet, nevertheless, you execute these ideas, it will be a great misfortune."

During a trip through Germany his brother had a scruple about leaving unanswered the irreverent remarks of Protestants against the Catholic religion. Taken literally, the old proverb, *He who is silent consents*, was the condemnation of his silence; nevertheless, something told him that he had not

erred in avoiding fruitless controversies. Alexis, who was of the same opinion, suggested to him some very wise reflections on the subject:

"In the first place, it is, as you think, quite useless to carry on arguments with Protestants. This is one of the cases in which we ought not to fight even for principles. I say fight; we ought not to even discuss. If your Protestants want to argue, listen to them only as far as politeness will not permit you to do otherwise. If they want to learn, recommend them to read Bossuet's 'Histoire des Variations.' In this way you will satisfy both charity and prudence. But tell me, are not German Protestants like ours?—that is to say, if they occupy themselves with religious matters at all, is it not as pure deists, or, to speak more exactly, as Socinians, and if they do not agitate dogmatic questions, is it not because they are entirely indifferent? Do you know of any among them who have really a religion—who pray? . . . I would be very much interested in hearing your judgment formed from observation of the religious state of the people of those unfortunate states.

"It may be hard for you not to be always able to reply to their objections and attacks. What this costs your self-love I do not care to diminish, but what there is in it that may wound your faith I would like to dissipate. To begin, do you think that the quickness of repartee which would enable you to have the last word, is a quality of faith? Do you think that a most skilful man, a profound theologian, can refute all objections on the spot?

St. Thomas of Aquin was once dining at the table of St. Louis. Suddenly he cried out, '*That is conclusive against the Manicheans.*' He had just found an unanswerable argument, and he forgot himself, like Archimedes. St. Louis, far from being offended by this distraction and this odd outcry, ordered his secretary to then and there take down the precious argument. You see, then, that you are very excusable in not being able to reply to everything. Moreover, conversations are very bad theological arenas. When we think of the rapidity with which conversation glides from one subject to another, how it is always unsystematic, superficial, futile, we should not hesitate to proscribe from it matters so complicated, so profound, and so necessary as theological matters. Be, then, perfectly easy on this subject."

Alexis was in continual fear lest his brother, dragged into the vortex of business, as the phrase is, would not have the necessary time for recollection, for meditation and prayer, practices without which he did not understand the Christian life. In the advice he gives Jules we feel that he speaks in good earnest from his own personal experience :

"I want to improve the opportunity of this letter, which I assure you is growing much longer than I intended, to seriously recommend you to use every day the beads I gave you. If you have lost them I engage to furnish you another pair. I have a supply. The Beads is an excellent devotion which was not invented by even the saints, but which the Blessed Virgin herself revealed to one of

her servants. It is not only good for people who cannot read ; it is very good, very profitable for the most learned.

"Perhaps you have not time to say the beads all at once. Very well, say them in several parts. If you cannot say them entirely each day, say as much as you can. Go to sleep in trying to finish when you are behindhand. It is not at all displeasing to the Blessed Virgin for us to go to sleep murmuring her most sweet name, and she will not fail to protect during the night him who has commended himself to her with his last waking breath. Do not be afraid of performing a mechanical devotion. Do not say, 'I am so tired that only my voice prays ; my mind is already asleep.' In the first place, if we pray only when we feel our heart enkindled we will not pray often ; in the second place, it is by praying at first badly, mechanically, with the voice only and half-asleep, that we will obtain the power to pray better."

He had this point so much at heart that, two years later, at the moment of starting for China, he again renewed his recommendations. How earnest and pressing they are ! *Insta opportune, importune*, was his device.

"In Paris we may say that nobody lives reasonably, neither those who are rich, on account of their manners and their luxury, nor those who are not, on account of the superhuman efforts they make to acquire riches. This particular characteristic of Paris cannot have escaped you who have travelled so extensively. Such excess is deplorable,

as I have tried to show in a letter I wrote father, and of which he approved, telling me that he would endeavor to make you appreciate it. It does not appear that I have gained much success; but to preach is my custom. However, reflect upon it yourself, and we will see if you do not think differently then. But I believe the trouble lies more in the difficulty of resisting the general current; and, in fact, I, who in Paris have nothing to do, am hardly able to struggle against it. On the other hand, it is right and necessary to labor with one's whole strength. Moreover, it is very difficult to determine the time to give to leisure. Finally, a man in business is not a Carthusian. One should, nevertheless, guard against that immoderate agitation which passes for deliberate activity, that tumult of ideas which is mistaken for mental labor. Meanwhile, if, with the intention of not allowing yourself to be carried away by that species of excitement, you will observe a certain little practice, I trust you will come out in the end safe and sound.

"It is to consecrate a half-hour every morning to meditation. Let it be your first act after rising; let nothing hinder you from it. By occupying yourself with spiritual things during that space of time you will not only render to God the homage you owe him, but, in addition, you will receive all the graces with which God rewards an action that is pleasing to him. Advancement in piety is a certain consequence of daily meditation. Do not forget that all good counsel comes from God—*all*,

even what relates to the things of this world. It is natural that God should give it to the man who consults him frequently and whose ear is attentive to his voice. Such is the fruit of meditation. If you find this exercise somewhat difficult, you must not be less persevering in it. The devil has nothing so much at heart as the preventing us from meditating, for nothing gives us more strength against him. But there is a method for meditation which greatly diminishes its natural difficulties.

"It is to read the evening before, in a book expressly for the purpose—and there are many of them—the subject of the meditation, with the principal points marked out. A quarter of an hour should be devoted every evening to taking this previously-masticated food; the night will prepare it, and in the morning it can be digested and relished without too much trouble. For the choice of a book and for the details of this method consult your director."

Had he, then, already renounced the world, he who wrote letters that reveal so much experience of the interior life? No, not yet; but, to tell the truth, he was very near it; he was of the number of those Christians who, conforming their lives to the counsels of the apostle, know how to use the world as if they used it not (I. Cor. vii. 31). In his different stations on the coast of Brittany, at Lorient, Brest, Indret, everywhere, he left this impression of a man dead to the world, still wearing its liveries, but belonging heart and soul to the valiant legion of the

strongholds of Israel. His old companions, when they came to see him, beheld with their own eyes, and not without astonishment, or learned from public report, this admirable change. One of them arrived at Indret during the autumn of 1849, and requested to visit the manufactories. As soon as he introduced himself as a former pupil of the Polytechnic School every door was opened to him. But this was not all he wanted ; he desired to see *Little Clerc*, and the hope of renewing acquaintance with him was the chief attraction, if not the real object, of his journey to Indret. Unfortunately, Clerc was for the moment engaged with Commander Bourgois in studying on the Loire a series of experiments relative to the different forms of screw-propellers. The visitor was much disappointed. To console him, an engineer of naval constructions said to him : " Wait until Sunday. He will certainly return for Communion. Then you can see him as much as you want." To his great regret, this dear comrade could not wait for Clerc's return ; he left not a little edified by what he had heard.

Another in Brest, frequenting the same chapel and occupying a place very near Clerc during the Holy Sacrifice, often remarked the fervor of his devotion, which was especially manifest when he came from the holy table. Back on his kneeling-bench, he was lost in profound meditation, and hid his face in his hands. If he raised his head for an instant his cheeks were seen to be wet with tears.

There arrived in this same city a naval officer

whom Alexis when he left Valparaiso had requested to furnish him for his return to France with introductions to some Christian friends, members of a Conference of St. Vincent de Paul. Knowing him to be attached to the port of Brest, this officer made it his first business to enquire for his old companion. He was told that he was absent, and to this information was added the best of accounts. "Your friend is the most zealous of us all, our model in everything, and the mainspring of all our good works. If he were here, ah! you would already have met him escorted by a legion of children of whom he is the schoolmaster, or rather the father, and to whom he distributes with the food of the body that of the soul. Always ready to do his utmost he allows himself but little rest."

And in truth, according to the testimony of the worthy ecclesiastics who were then acquainted with all the secrets of his soul, he excelled in equalizing his charity and mortification, two virtues whose mutual agreement is generally profitable to both. The Abbé Guillet,* his pastor and director during the whole of his sojourn at Indret, informs us how he apportioned his modest salary. Each month he divided it into three parts; the first was for his venerated father, the second for the poor, and the third and smallest for his personal maintenance. After this he still managed to save some of his own portion for charity, and he im-

* The Abbé Guillet has recently died pastor of St. Nicholas of Nantes.

posed such privations upon himself that his superior officer, Commander Bourgois, fearing for his health, had to interfere. His spirit of mortification was so great, another member of the Breton clergy * assures us, that during Lent he limited himself to a plate of thick Trappist soup per day.

Anybody else in his place would have thought that prudence commanded him to lay aside a few crowns, and to amass a little sum against unexpected emergencies which might suddenly embarrass an officer in the discharge of his duties, or even cut him short in his career. Clerc did not reason so; his generosity would not be shackled by any calculation or any anticipation of the future. "As to the money you are unwilling to take," on one occasion he wrote to his brother who refused to draw from his purse, "remember well that it is not mine, for you know that all, absolutely all, that we do not need belongs to the poor." All that he did not need, his superfluous money, was all that was not rigorously necessary for his maintenance, and God knows how little he lived upon. He denied himself the most innocent pleasures, even so far as to limit the replenishing of his snuff-box, a subject about which he would jest pleasantly, being always the first one to laugh at his pennilessness, as he called the excess of his voluntary poverty.

"Now," he continued, speaking of the money he had vainly tried to induce his brother to ac-

* The Abbé Guéguenon, pastor of St. Martin of Morlaix. It was in Brest that he was Clerc's spiritual director.

cept, "since I have no immediate need of it, it is superfluous; if you, likewise, have no need of it, I do not propose to keep it, but shall pay it to others."

Thus, in his estimation, he did not give, he *paid*, to the poor, believing he fulfilled a duty of justice in appropriating to them all he could spare. Need we explain this matter to the reader? The severest morality does not go as far as this, and does not claim, even for the poor, under the name of superfluity, all we have left after we have generously provided for our own necessities. Clerc had to rectify his ideas of alms-giving when as a priest it was his part to apply them to others; still, we must confess that there is something beautiful in deceiving one's self in his fashion, and that such self-deception is not dangerous for people of the world, whose rigorism has no consequences save to themselves.

We have thought that as Clerc had for a witness of his life at that time a distinguished officer, a capable judge of all kinds of merit, it was our duty to seek information from so precious a source, and this is what Admiral Bourgois, yielding to our desires, sent us in reply: "These memories are already far in the past. Nevertheless, I have not forgotten that the young ensign showed at that epoch (1849) a maturity of judgment and a conscientious and prudent zeal which, joined to a solid education and a most upright character, gave promise of a very excellent naval officer. The desire of being useful to his fellow-men by instruct-

ing them and improving them morally was already developed in him. An elementary school comprising the entire ship's crew had been established on board the *Pélican*. Every evening when the ship's sailing did not prevent, the tables were carried to the middle-deck, and Ensign Clerc directed the school with a patient and enlightened zeal. He himself gave more advanced lessons to those of the men who aimed at becoming captains or mates in the merchant marine service, or at promotion in the military marine service. I have since met several of them who profited by his instruction so far as to make careers for themselves, and who expressed deep gratitude for the lessons which had assisted them to do so."

These reminiscences of Admiral Bourgois agree perfectly with his first impressions of Alexis Clerc preserved in the notes which he sent to the Minister of the Navy in July, 1849. Here is the opinion he then had of his young and clever assistant: "An extremely zealous and enlightened officer. A graduate of the Polytechnic School, he combines with a wide theoretic knowledge sufficient experience of a sailor's business and sufficient attachment to its duties to make him in every respect a remarkable officer."

As to the Abbé Guillet, who while parish priest at Indret performed the duties of naval chaplain, he congratulated himself on possessing in Alexis not only an exemplary parishioner but also an auxiliary rich in energy and resources, and whose greatest delight was to be employed in all sorts of

good works for the welfare of his neighbor and the benefit of souls. Clerc already, in friendly discussions, exercised himself valiantly in wielding the strong arms furnished him by his inexhaustible arsenal, the "Summa Theologiæ" of St. Thomas. When his comrades brought forward objections against religion, he would reply: "Is that all? Truly, you are not well supplied; I will offer you many more." Hereupon he would propose to them St. Thomas' most serious objections to the points attacked, and answer them as the great doctor did. "You are right," would be his friends' verdict. "If I am right you should follow my example. You flatter yourselves that the Catholic religion is afraid of your objections. All of them, those of your most famous philosophers included, are only *scraps* from St. Thomas, who answered them long ago!" If the persons whom he thus forced to capitulate did not surrender unconditionally, the blow was struck, and later on grace finished the work of conversion, in which the Abbé Guillet had the happiness of co-operating. "I had not yet established a Conference of St. Vincent de Paul at Indret," adds that good priest. "One morning Clerc came to me and said: 'I am not tranquil; I believe that my present position is not the one in which God wants me. I am not worthy to be a priest, but if the Pope should form a Catholic army,* I would to-morrow carry him my epaulets and say to him: Most Holy Father, I am your

*Notice the date, long anterior to the organization of the Pontifical Zouaves.

man.' " Abbé Guillet replied: " My dear friend, I believe that you are exactly in your place; for if it is necessary to have good priests and good religious, it is also necessary to have good Christians in the world to edify it by their example and to prove that in all conditions of life it is possible to be truly Christian. Thus, in this parish you are worth to me, you alone, a whole Conference of St. Vincent de Paul !"

These ideas of vocation, still very vague, assumed consistence only little by little after several years of service; nevertheless, the young officer's most intimate friends could not help perceiving his repugnance to contract any irrevocable engagement with the world, and one of his companions who was pursued by the same thoughts and touched by the same grace was even clear-sighted enough to penetrate the projects which, as yet, Clerc concealed from himself, and which were only to be accomplished a long time afterwards.

While in Lorient Clerc frequented the house of Commander Le Bobinnec, one of those old-fashioned, honest Breton houses, redolent with the perfume of all the patriarchal virtues. Mr. Le Bobinnec, then a ship's lieutenant and already father of a family, had met Clerc in a naval commission to which they both belonged. " In our first interview," he tells us, " I found in that young officer such unusual distinction, joined to such great modesty, that I felt drawn to him on the spot. I saw before me not only a fervent Christian but a thoroughly instructed Christian. I begged him not to

forget that my mother-in-law loved to receive all the officers whom I presented to her, and that we should esteem ourselves happy if he would kindly give us all the leisure he had to dispose of. My mother-in-law, a woman of great piety, appreciated him, and included him in the number of those she liked to call *her children.*

"Our dear Clerc accepted this adoption with his ordinary simplicity, and did not hesitate to fulfil its duties with a naturalness that charmed us."

Mr. Le Bobinnec here adds: "I must refrain from giving to the publicity of a biography many details easier to understand than to express. Let it suffice for me to say that whenever I pass through the Rue de Sèvres I enter the Jesuit Fathers' church, and, kneeling on the marble that covers his remains, I cannot help saying to the dear martyr: 'Thou who didst watch over the cradle of my children, do not forget them now.'"

Clerc loved children so much! He seemed so happy when holding them on his knees! His friends thought he would make a good father of family, and interested themselves in preparing for him a future suited to his tastes.

Some time later he was in Nantes knocking at the door of one of the professors of the royal college. Letters from Lorient had announced his visit. He found one of the most respectable of interiors; the gentle seriousness of the Rollins and the Lhomonds seemed to him to hover over this family. Besides, the *dot* was suitable, the young lady perfectly well-bred and fully deserving of

esteem. Although these preliminaries engaged him to nothing whatsoever, Clerc, like a good son, thought it his duty to write about the matter to his father, from whom he kept no secrets. His letter is curious on account of the species of embarrassment visible in it when he undertakes to sketch the portrait of the lady, whose acquaintance his father would, of course, prefer to make beforehand, since there was a possibility that she might be his daughter-in-law some day. Conscious that he has succeeded badly in this task and has given but a very imperfect outline, he adds by way of excuse: "I have seen her only once and for a rather short time, and I do not notice women very much and do not look at them very closely, especially young ones."

It was a charming embarrassment in a man of so little natural timidity, and who had already lived so long. He was not so ingenuous at eighteen, but God, by the effusion of his grace, had given him a new heart and had renewed his youth like the eagle's. *Renovabitur ut aquilæ juventus tua.*

He concludes his letter with these words: "However, I am not thinking of marrying."

This was a ray of light to his poor father, and the cause of an uneasiness of which we shall find traces in the rest of their correspondence.

A year passes—eighteen months. Clerc is now a lieutenant and resides in Brest; his fellow-members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society have entrusted to him the duties of secretary, which he discharges at an evening reunion with the earnest-

ness and energy he gives to everything. A new member arrives, an ensign. This new-comer is himself urged to quit the world by a powerful attraction which will not be long in gaining the victory. He has since described to us his impressions of his new acquaintance and the characteristic circumstances of this first meeting.

Clerc was not handsome, at least in the Greek sense of the word, and his face, with its sharp outlines, would not have offered a very pleasing model to a sculptor. The extreme mobility of his features instantly betrayed all his feelings; his eye of fire and his vibrating voice bespoke a soul as enthusiastic as energetic. Short of stature, he was that evening muffled up in a long, light overcoat that reached half way down his legs and gave him a sort of clerical appearance. The meeting passed as usual in relating the wants of the poor persons taken care of by the conference and in arranging the distribution of the alms. However it came about, our two naval officers remarked one another, and, after the prayer was said, they felt a need of meeting again without witnesses.

Clerc invited his new confrère to call at his residence the next day, so that they might go together to visit the poor. The invitation was accepted, and at the hour named the new acquaintance was at the rendezvous. He met Clerc at the door of his room, which he was just entering. The two redescended the stairs and walked side by side for five minutes, exchanging a few words meanwhile. It was sufficient to make them thoroughly known

to one another, so much in unison were their hearts. "But how is it," the ensign asked *ex abrupto*, "that with such ideas you are still in the navy?"

At this unexpected apostrophe Clerc turned shortly, drew back a step, held himself erect, and, looking the ensign straight in the eyes, said: "And you—why are you in the navy?"

"Hold! you are right," replied the other.

From that moment they were constant companions; their works, their exercises of devotion, their common future, vaguely foreseen, drew them together. Sometimes they wandered to the fields, and in the open air abandoned themselves to the joy of their hearts, talking of God quite at their ease, and even singing in his praise some song of the Church.

Providence reserved for them a still closer intimacy.

CHAPTER IV.

ALEXIS CLERC DURING THE EVENTS OF 1848.

Alexis to his Brother Jules.

"MARCH 1, 1848.

"WHAT shall I say to you, my dear Jules? Do I really know what I think? What is there left after this tempest that at one sweep has carried away men and institutions? Where are you? where will you stop? You want to overthrow a minister, and you overthrow the monarchy? Do you consider that incalculable mass which you start into motion? Where will you find the force to stop it? Must there be the same old, cruel oscillations before it stops spontaneously? It took but five hours to destroy a work that cost so much labor! Now, whence shall we derive confidence in the thing established? It is the tenth revolution since '89—intervals of five years between them! How much money! how much blood! and why? Let us weep over a country where ten successive Governments have not known how, even at the last moment, to make the concession which would have saved them; let us weep over a country which cannot peacefully conquer its rights.

"I regret neither Guizot nor Louis Philippe. I

am terrified at their fall, but I am much more terrified at the immediate future, perhaps already past for you.

"It is not a political revolution you have accomplished, it is a social revolution. You will say, perhaps you say now, the *ex-bourgeoisie*, just as you have said the *ex-nobility*.

"Behold the people, the laborer, the *prolétaire* on the escutcheon! Will these usurping waves rise to power, or will they drag power down to their level? Yes, certainly; if the nobility was unjust and tyrannical towards the other classes, the *bourgeoisie* was the same towards the *prolétaires;* but will these be any better? Is injustice any different whether a hundred suffer from it or a hundred thousand? The injustice of the *bourgeoisie* sprang from egotism and indifference; will not the other be from hatred and cruelty? The *bourgeoisie* had little morality and little enlightenment; but what is there to suddenly raise our new masters to the level even of the *bourgeoisie*?

"Your provisional Government, which has improvised itself—which, moreover, does not pretend to do as in 1830, to really consult the opinion of France—proclaims the Republic! Our vote is already no more than a sanction. Let us not deceive ourselves, and let us not be deceived by words. There is no revolution without, as a consequence, usurpation of power. My opinion, and I believe it to be well founded, is that France is not republican. Nevertheless, the Republic will be accepted I do not doubt. Does this show usur-

pation of power—yes or no? *Facts are accomplished,* as Guizot said. Behold, then, France governed by Paris! God grant it is but provisional. We must once more accept this fact accomplished; but there is another which we must not accept, against which we must fight to the death if there is a purpose of accomplishing it, or if it is being accomplished: it is the government of Paris by the Commune, by the clubs, by the revolutionary army.

"You already have the Commune, the revolutionary army of your twenty-five mobilized legions; beware of the clubs. The right of reunion, which is just, necessary, and the dispute of which has brought about all the trouble—the right of reunion may easily be transformed into that of association, of clubs. There is but a step; is it possible that it will not be taken?

"I consent to the republic, but till the day of our death let us prevent unauthorized governments from first encompassing and then tyrannizing over the national government."

Such were the sentiments Alexis communicated to his brother Jules on the morrow of that revolution of February 24, which had in a few hours overthrown the establishment of July, and transferred the destinies of France to the hazardous decision of universal suffrage. Let us acknowledge that the young naval officer, who at that time apprehended everything, was wiser and more enlightened than many others. Because the people, surprised at so easy a victory, acted like a

good prince; because they did not tear down the crosses and plunder the churches as in 1830, men thought all was safe, and abandoned themselves to a blind confidence which was very soon to be cruelly undeceived. It was with reason that the Provisional Government, where Lamartine sat beside Ledru-Rollin, in company with Louis Blanc, Flocon, Albert, the *working mechanic*, etc., told no good tale to our Alexis; for it was too plain to whoever looked at things coolly that the concessions made to the revolutionary passions were more fit to exalt than to appease them. But the fallen power was so little regretted that there was a disposition to forgive the *émeute*, provided it was moderate. The Citizen Caussidière himself, become from the conspirator he was the evening before prefect of police, calmed the uneasiness of honest people, who certainly would not have selected him for such an office, by promising them in his picturesque style *to make order out of disorder*. The least indication in the masses of respect for property and for religion was enthusiastically welcomed as a pledge of security, and those who heard them have not forgotten these words of Father Lacordaire, spoken, in allusion to one of the episodes of the victorious *émeute* from the pulpit of Notre Dame, on Sunday, February 27: "Prove the existence of God to you! Why, you would have the right to call me a parricide and guilty of sacrilege if I should dare to undertake to prove God! The doors of this cathedral would open of themselves and would show you this peo-

ple magnificent in its wrath, bearing God even to his altar amidst the respect of an adoring throng." The audience burst into applause.

Then the *Journal des Débats*, drawing a moral from the incident, added this commentary: "It is well. Let the Church take her place like all of us. Let her show herself, the people will recognize her. Let her have no fear of the revolution, to the end that the revolution may have no fear of her. God has surrendered the world to discussion—*tradidit mundum disputationi*. Let the Church use her arms—preaching and charity, instruction and action. Let her help herself, and God will help her."

At that epoch it was no small merit not to share any of the current illusions; I do not speak only of those of the *Journal des Débats*, which compromised a little too much with the revolution, but of those of the wisest and best of men, influenced, it must be allowed, by the excess of their good faith and by their inclination to judge others by themselves. This merit belonged to our young sailor. We have seen how at the first, and before any sadly instructive experiences, he denounced the usurpation of revolutions which demand of universal suffrage a tardy and illusive sanction of an accomplished fact; and further, in the clubs of 1848, which in general made more noise than they did harm, he already discerns the confused germs of the fatal Commune, whose victim he himself will be in 1871.

Who of us on reaching the age of manhood, has

not found himself in his turn face to face with a successful revolution?—1815, 1830, 1848, 1852, 1871. The dates are so near together that everybody has encountered some one of them. Now just this is the trial, too often the quicksand of our judgment, of our character. Few pass through it without damage, and it is a great honor not to have been ensnared. It is good in all cases, once the danger is past and calm re-established, to make a severe examination of conscience on the way one has managed one's bark during the tempest. In offering my readers a standard of comparison, of which Alexis' letters to his family will furnish all the points, I shall provide them with one means the more for thorough self-knowledge and impartial self-judgment.

Living in the provinces and contemplating the struggle from a distance, Clerc had over his Parisian correspondents the advantage of escaping the vertigo which it is so difficult to avoid when one is condemned to be present in person and to breathe day and night the fiery atmosphere of revolutions. His strong religious studies, the healthy ideas he gained from his "Summa" of St. Thomas, were also a great preservative to him, and with no other aid we shall see him victoriously overleap the pitfalls that are not sufficiently mistrusted by certain illustrious and fervent Catholics.

One month, two months pass. It is now known what may be expected from the Provisional Government, from the men of the Hôtel de Ville and

the Luxembourg. Public credit has fallen, the national workshops have killed labor, excitement is constantly on the increase and extends from Paris to the departments. But the time of the elections draws near, and France is going to use universal suffrage to give herself a constituent assembly. Things happen just right; it is Holy Week, and the electoral urns will be opened on Easter-day. Alexis perceives that his brother has the political fever, and that his suffrage will wander, to fall perhaps upon the head of Ledru-Rollin or of Lamennais, if not even of Pierre Leroux or of Victor Considérant. Now is the opportunity, or never, for a sound fraternal correction. This is what he writes to Jules:

"I am truly afflicted at the position in which you put yourself, and I beg you to reflect upon what I am going to say to you, and to reflect seriously.

"You are most thoroughly devoted to the public weal, and I honor you for it. But why is your devotedness so vexed, uneasy, anxious, hurried? You lose yourself in your bustle, your proceedings, your speeches. Be more calm. Do you think that if everybody had to take so much trouble to be republican, the republic would be possible? Do you want a republic that so entirely monopolizes the citizens that there must be slaves to provide for the material life, as was the case in the republics of antiquity? How is it your agitation, your uneasy, hurried actions go so far as to give you a fever, and you do not see that the system is

false and bad? You ought not to act this way. I beg you to have regard to my advice. Rest eight days without going to the club, and then only go from time to time. Do not give up your life to a whirlwind that absorbs it and is incapable of producing anything good. Do you know, or do you not know where the truth is to be found? Is it not in religion? Do you not believe in the virtue and enlightenment of some priests? Go and ask them to name your candidates; they are acquainted with men and they will teach you about them; you cannot learn to know them through your clubs. I do not wish to enter into details, but I wish to tell you what I would have done.

"Give up going to the club. Recover your composure. Remember we are in Holy Week. Go quite simply and ask the Committee Montalembert for candidates, or go to the Abbé de la Bouillerie, or to any pious manowho may possess your confidence, and rest quietly; but, above all things, do not at any price make a compact with evil. I pray you let there not be on your list a single name which your conscience does not approve. Do not attempt to deceive yourself in this matter by advantageous combinations. Evil is evil absolutely, and think of the part the Assembly will play."

Alas! wishing to do himself what he so earnestly recommends to his brother, he is greatly troubled to find a sufficient number of names that his conscience can approve of. We will only say that he had on his list, side by side with the names of

Father Lacordaire and the Abbé Deguerry, pastor of the Madeleine, those of Michelet and Béranger.

After having copied his list for his brother, Alexis adds: "I do not recommend it to you; still, I think there is nothing in it to condemn. I reproach myself for only thinking this, and not being sure of it."

His scruple was perfectly justifiable. What! this exceedingly severe censor of his brother's votes, who would reproach him for Ledru-Rollin and Lamennais, will himself vote for Béranger and Michelet! Béranger, the songster of "Lisette" and of "Dieu des bonnes Gens"! Michelet, the calumniator of the clergy, who had quite recently poured out his gall and bile in an ignoble pamphlet entitled "The Priest, the Woman, and the Family!" Behold to what compromises men were brought by that absurd system of voting which since the 4th of September we have been practising again, and which will always find warm partisans among the advocates of universal suffrage! And they call it interrogating the nation!

What a disturbance of ideas there was in that year 1848, and what a strange confusion of words and things!

See that former disciple of Saint-Simon and Fourier, now a good Catholic, recommending his choice of candidateship with the double authority of what he was and what he has become, recommending it to socialists as well as to Catholics! "My return to Christianity," he says, "*has never caused me to feel the necessity of condemning the*

first bent of my ideas. Undoubtedly, I have repudiated in the Saint-Simonistic and Fourieristic theories all that was incompatible with Christian truth; but I owe to them my having recognized long ago the necessity and also the possibility of realizing that same truth in all social relations." He adds: "*The republican principle annuls the only obstacles that can oppose this realization. Therefore, I am republican by a double title—as a Christian and as a socialist.*"

And his choice of candidateship, besides being perfectly honest and in good faith, was warmly patronized by the Catholic committees.

Clerc, exiled to the provinces, and deprived of the information he would have wished to have concerning the Parisian electoral tickets, thought he was acting for the best in hazarding certain names with which he had no sympathy whatsoever. But if the Catholic elector could reconcile it to his conscience to name Michelet and Béranger, what must be thought of the system which extorted from him such votes? If Alexis was a hundred leagues removed from socialistic ideas, his brother did not repel them so resolutely, and was one of those persons who tried to harmonize them with Catholic dogma to a certain degree. A subscriber to the *Ere Nouvelle*, he did not disapprove of Father Lacordaire's sitting in the National Assembly not far from Barbès and Ledru-Rollin. Alexis did all in his power to change his views in this respect. In the course of the month of June he undertook to write a long letter of a dogmatic character to Madame de

S—, whose superiority of mind he was not the only one to appreciate. This letter was evidently intended for his brother much more than for the lady whose well-known sentiments promised him an ally in the cause he was trying to gain. But while he wrote events hurried after one another, and terrible explosions of popular fury, enkindled by the secret societies, scattered consternation and terror throughout France. Under the influence of heart-rending emotions which were constantly recurring, Alexis terminates with these words, that are a vivid description of the situation :

"I wrote you these cold pages while France was plunged in fire and blood, and while the telegraphic despatches kept us in a state of feverish anxiety. You will be astonished at my having continued writing; it is because this horrible war does not touch the real question, which will come up sooner or later. I believe I have as yet no misfortune of those who are dear to me to lament. We have enough to do to weep over the country and to pray for her. May so terrible a chastisement be an expiation of our crimes, and may it please God to accept so much heroic devotedness as atonement for so much indifference and egotism. Let us open our eyes and judge the trees of the new doctrines by the fruits they bear. I have the hope that in the end misfortune, which sanctifies man, will make the nation better. Oh ! if God would order it thus, we should then indeed be saved."

This was as yet a premature hope.

"May my blood be the last poured out!" exclaimed in dying the martyred archbishop, struck down before the barricade of the Faubourg St. Antoine at the moment he was bearing to the insurgents a message of peace. General Négrier had fallen at the same place, and General de Bréa had been cowardly assassinated at the Barrière de Fontainebleau, both after having stopped the firing of their troops and while trying to negotiate. Five other generals and two representatives had met death in that horrible struggle, which was one of the most furious that ever drenched the streets of Paris with blood.

Clerc's fears for his family were quieted only when his father, whose patriotic ardor was his dread, had given him a sign of life.

"My dear father," he wrote July 1, "I thank you very much for your letter of June 27, which I have expected most impatiently. I learned from the papers that the Faubourg du Temple held out till the third day, and I plainly foresaw that the neighborhood of the bridges and the few ways of communication with the boulevard would give a strategic importance to the quarter where you reside. The elder Madame Mallet received on the 28th a letter from Madame Pagès, from which I gathered that you were safe and sound; nevertheless, I was anxious for direct news, and I thank you for not having delayed sending it to me.

"I am much obliged (don't be vexed) to the insurgents, the troops, and the national guard, for having in turn kept you a prisoner in the house.

I cannot sufficiently remind you that it is foolish to go out for an airing in the midst of a civil war. It is impossible to be calm under such critical circumstances, and if it had not been for your forced captivity you might have exposed yourself to a useless danger. From your account of your first day's peregrination, I conjecture that you had many chances of not escaping so cheaply.

"I shall read with great interest all you can recall of the insurgents' speeches, all you can relate of their means and their object, so as to gain a correct knowledge of the terrible enemy that has almost ruined the country and that it has cost so dear to overcome.

"If you will permit some moralizing upon this great misfortune, I refer you to my last letter. The state is a responsible being, subject, like man, to the law of suffering; it follows, therefore, that justice must be satisfied in its regard. History in terror registers the cause of these catastrophes; bloody expiations are needed to wash out so many unpunished crimes. Finally, it must be understood that the hand that chastises seeks before all to correct.

"The chastisement is terrible; France has shed the purest of her blood. I hope that we have nothing more to expiate. May the just and merciful God grant us to change our ways and henceforth walk in those he has marked out for us. Oh! then France will be really saved. Otherwise, if we continue our efforts to establish the foundations of society on a clever egotism; if that egotism,

as enlightened as you please, is to be the principle of morality and of the social contract, we are lost. There is no longer question of yielding to the state a part of our liberty by obeying the law, a part of our property by paying the taxes ; we would remain in our old errors, and we would have witnessed only the first scene of the destruction of our country.

"No; France, who has always given the world the example of great and generous sentiments—and this is more than her power, more than her military genius, what makes us love her—must, ceasing to copy English civilization which suits neither her manners, her mind, nor her heart, abjure egotism and let the fraternity she has graven upon her arms be deeply graven in her heart.

"The deplorable philosophers of the last century and of this have succeeded, the former in drying up our hearts, the latter in inspiring us by means of calumnies with hatred towards the pretended happy ones of the world, and in making us believe that our destiny and our right is an unmixed happiness here upon earth. These doctrines have not rested in the domain of ideology; newspapers and pamphlets have carried them everywhere; the "Mysteries of Paris," "The Wandering Jew," and many other productions that have made less noise have popularized them ; and I do not doubt that the investigation which will be made of this abominable insurrection will prove that it was only the logical consequence of these principles. These romancers, these philosophers do not

fight; they detest civil war, it is impossible to convict them; nevertheless, they are the most guilty, they are the true instigators of civil war. Will they understand what they have done? I dare not hope it of all of them. The *Réforme* has given the generous example of regretting the malicious remarks it published, and for which it finds itself severely punished."

These are certainly uncommonly exalted and just views, and would to God they might have had some influence on the governing classes, who, being more enlightened, bear before God and before history the weight of a heavier responsibility.

The following letter touches upon a subject less grave, but is striking enough, and besides shows very plainly the nobility of spirit which our Alexis knew full well how to reconcile with Christian humility. In order that it may be understood it will be sufficient to explain that the *Caffarelli* being definitely withdrawn for alteration, and Mr. Mallet having received another command, Alexis' family were extremely desirous that he should not be separated from a superior officer whose friendship he had long since gained. Hence the efforts which Mr. Jules Clerc made with the friend of their childhood, Mr. Emile Marie, whose father become minister of justice, occupied the hotel of the Place Vendôme. Between ourselves, Alexis was not sorry for the opportunity of commenting upon the republican austerity of his brother Jules, and finding it at fault.

"My good Jules: I do not know how to scold you for what you have done about my sailing with

Mr. Mallet, especially as Madame Pagès advised you to do it; but I must tell you that it is with intense displeasure that I have heard of it. How could you do for me what your susceptibility would prevent you from doing for yourself? For pity's sake, if I have the good fortune to possess some friends in places above me, do not make me lose them. I can understand that kind of contempt influential people feel when men make stepping-stones of their friendship and intimacy. Do you not see that Emile Marie's position and our friendship with him are two things completely distinct, that it is as absurd as unjust to make the one a pretext for using the other? Probably you have no idea of the multitude of solicitors that crowd round that poor fellow, and you deprive him of the one little moment of pleasure he would have experienced in thinking that I had not importuned him.

"He has much more need of a disinterested affection than I have of all the services he could render me by his position. And you, my good Jules, whose delicacy of feeling is so exquisite, you have done this! What pains me most is that your affection for me, the affection of you all in Paris, is so voluntarily blind; for, in the first place, you would not do for yourselves what you do for me, and secondly, if you were not so greatly mistaken regarding my sentiments you would not do it for me. You have been repulsed by De Plas;*

*This Christian friend shared all Clerc's sentiments and the two were worthy of one another. Later we shall be better acquainted with him.

I was sure you would be and I am delighted; Emile ought to have treated you in the same way. Now do not think that I set no value on friendship and that I make it a point never to ask anything of a friend. It is too sweet to me to be useful to those I love; but I will ask of my friends only such things as depend upon them personally, and not upon their public functions. The amusing side of the affair is that you make one more old school republican who takes up the trade of a solicitor, and I, who am the reactionist, I act the puritan.

"I had foreseen with regard to De Plas the tricks of which you were capable, but I acknowledge that I did not have the subtlety to guess that you would besiege that poor Emile for proceedings so entirely out of his province.

"Finally, I must tell you that, according to your own way of looking at things, you have made a blunder. You imagine that Mr. Mallet, who is acquainted with all Paris, who knows all the ministers, has need of that poor Emile to convey a letter to his friend N——? Truly, you must seem very innocent to persons who know how to deal with men. I do not mean to say that Mr. Mallet is not sincerely desirous of having me with him, but there is no necessity of his resorting to such little wire-pulling to obtain what is his right. One of two things is the case: either he does not desire it enough to obtain it—and this will not prevent me from being pleased with him for having desired it to the degree he has—or he has employed an outlandish manner of giving satisfaction to your

impatience. Therefore my poor Jules has wasted the display of his republican incorruptibility to the doorkeepers of the Place Vendôme. It was such an agreeable pastime for us to wax indignant over the corruption and nepotism of our contemporaries! Hurry to find Emile, enter in spite of the doorkeepers whom you have already learned how to baffle and tell him to stay at home; that I am always anxious that he should travel two leagues to come to see me, but that I do not want him to travel two steps to obtain for me anything whatsoever."

The letter concludes with this advice addressed to his brother's faith and piety:

"As for you, Jules, recollect yourself as much as you can. I acknowledge that it is very difficult for everybody, and that you more than other people have the obstacles of a very busy life to contend with; but do what you can. Ten minutes of prayer are worth all the politics in the world, and, besides, prayer is the only true and sound politics, for there is a Providence that governs us. Impress well on your mind this beautiful saying, of Bossuet I believe: '*Man vexes himself, and God leads him*'; you will soon derive from it a calm of which you have long been deprived, and a wiser judgment of many events; you will also interfere in my affairs more to my liking; and, finally, I hope we shall have no more disagreements on any subject, as is becoming to brothers and Christians. Till we soon meet, A. Clerc."

"Do not delay going to thank Emile for his good-will, and to dispense him from it."

Meanwhile, Alexis perceived that his brother was not sufficiently on his guard against certain current ideas, which under the vague formulas that enveloped them favored socialism, and that his good faith had been surprised by the affectation of respecting his Catholic orthodoxy. The explanations Jules gave only half satisfied him; he took them up one by one, discussed them, examined them, and made it his duty to prove that if all veils, all equivocations are removed, these two contraries—socialism and Christianity—are absolutely and radically irreconcilable.

There is so much reason in these pages, so much serious good sense enlightened by faith, that we believe we shall gratify our readers by reproducing a large part of them. Assuredly, the doctrines of Fourier and Victer Considérant, as they were professed in 1848, have no adepts in these days, and they may pass as superannuated in presence of less speculative doctrines which have since made their mark with a certain *éclat*. But the principles of the errors whence the evil proceeds are the same, and they all agree on one point—the denial of the supernatural. As to the principles which Clerc opposed to those dangerous Utopianisms, they are unchangeable as truth is.

It appears, then, that Mr. Jules Clerc had said: "I do not believe that religion ought to interfere in a direct manner in political questions, unless to keep constantly before our eyes the Gospel principles of morality and fraternity."

"Very good," returns Alexis; "let us borrow

infallible principles from the religious order, and let us build upon them; we may easily deceive ourselves in particular cases, but we have good assurances of truth. You are in the right; God has given us all that is necessary for our salvation, for our real good, and to this end he has provided not only in the order of grace, but also in the order of nature; he has laid down natural principles and has commanded us to follow them, and if we will not we shall destroy instead of building up.

"I beg you to excuse the digression I am now going to make; it is not a direct reply to your letter, but I am extremely anxious that you should not imagine religion to have a particular domain in which it must shut itself up, and that the public welfare should be ruled by its own laws. On the contrary, religion is the universal law, and it ought to be the only law, for the only end of man is his salvation which depends solely upon religion. Creatures, nature, societies, are, and should be, only the means of attaining this end.

"Now, man has fallen, and by his fall he has lost everything in the order of grace, and this concerns only religion; further, his nature has been corrupted, and this concerns the natural order and society. But by the Redemption he is capable of re-entering the state of grace and of overcoming the corruption of his nature. Hence results that the first condition of all society is religion, and it is impossible to name any society that has been left destitute of it. Corruption being the portion of every man, it is necessary that every man should

endeavor to overcome himself; it is the greatest service he can render society. In consequence of this corruption society has the right of coercion over those who threaten its existence. Finally, man has on account of his fault been condemned to labor and suffering, and He who pronounced the sentence will maintain it.

"Very good! Fourier and his disciples deny that man has fallen, and, supposing him to have come from the hands of God just as he is, declare him perfect, and would permit him to satisfy his most ardent passions and his most wayward desires. As a philosophy it is easy to prove that this system is absurd, inasmuch as it overlooks the inmost nature of our heart, and cannot explain present and past evil. But our faith leads us to reject these follies. If man is bad, what can be more foolish than to deal with him as though he were good?

"I saw V—— * on his return from Paris, and I reproached him for having deceived you. He defended himself by saying that he had concealed nothing from you, and that, as it is possible to create the same system while starting from different principles, he had limited himself to proposing to you those practical realizations without troubling himself about the principles that might serve as their basis in your judgment. In political matters, it seems, people occupy themselves a great

* One of their friends, interested for a considerable time in socialistic doctrines, and of whom the 4th of September, 1870, when the Republic was declared in Paris after the battle of Sedan, did not fail to make a prefect.

deal with facts and little with ideas. As for him, he plainly declared to me that the two principles—the foundations of his projects of reform—were that man was not fallen, and that after his death he would continue to merit eternally in a new and different life. With these principles I agree that he is logical enough ; can you with contrary principles be logical ? No, I have already told you so ; your good faith has been surprised.

"You say, 'Fourier's ideas on the organization of society are beautiful, inasmuch as they turn individual egotism, when they do not destroy it, to the well-being of all.' As to their *beauty*, we shall see about that later; as to their *falsity*, we shall discover that immediately. *Labor must become a pleasure by the attraction which organization will know how to attach to it.* Our conscience tells us loudly that this cannot be ; but what reply has Fourier to these words : 'Cursed is the earth in thy work ; with labor and toil thou shalt eat thereof (its fruits) all the days of thy life; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herbs of the earth. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken ; for dust thou art, and into dust shalt thou return' (Genesis, iii. 17–19). After this shall we have the credulity to rely upon his promises of a terrestrial paradise ? Let us never forget this terrible sentence which weighs upon humanity, and of which all our modern prophets want to relieve us.

"Is it *beautiful* to perfect gluttony to the de-

gree of eating, I believe, six hearty meals a day? to permit sensuality to cast off all restraint? to grant to the lowest instincts satisfactions which even our actual corruption cannot think of without blushing? You talk of the means which Fourier would use to destroy selfishness; but there are none others, in his opinion, save the free development of man's passions! Moreover, he does not desire to destroy selfishness; he would be very sorry to have it destroyed, because he needs the development of all the heart of man contains; but he utilizes it. That is not overstupid; still, until now I have supposed that God alone was capable of drawing good from evil.

"Finally, I conclude with the last phrase of your first sheet: 'Solidarity is a Christian sentiment, and I do not believe it will be inapplicable in the course of time.'

"This phrase has not been well reflected. Solidarity is not a sentiment, it is a law by which men are responsible, the ones for the others, for the good or evil they have done. The Fourierites give the name of *unityism* to what you mean, and three months ago you would with us have called it charity, which certainly is, as you say, a Christian sentiment, and so Christian that it does not exist outside of Christianity. This makes me think that the course of time will not render it applicable if the world does not become Christian, and that if God grants us the grace to be Christian, it will be, whatever the time, applicable and even applied. You will say that I apply it very little and that all

this is very severe; if it wounds you, I sincerely beg your pardon. The importance of the questions raised by your few lines justifies, perhaps, my eagerness to have you examine deceptive novelties with more deliberation."

Accurately spoken, it seems to us. Doubtless this argumentation, borrowing all its majors from the truths of faith, would not convert a blind disciple of Fourier, but it had its weight with the excellent Catholic to whom it was addressed. Alexis did not ask of reason, too often straitened for decisive proofs, what faith gives abundantly to whoever has the happiness of believing. The practical bent of his mind is manifested in this discussion, in which he does not seek to shine, but to convince as a man who knows the value of souls, and to whom the soul of his brother is especially dear.

We must note the impression which the voting of the 10th of December, 1848, made upon him.

The election of Prince Napoleon to the presidency by five millions of voices disagreeably surprised him, and it required time for him to recover from what he called "a rude shock to his political sagacity." He had voted for Cavaignac, not through republicanism, but through sincerity in his acceptance of the political system legally established, and also through a generous reaction against the odious calumnies for which the incorruptible general had furnished no pretext. He experienced an instinctive repugnance for his princely competitor, who always appeared to him as the adventurer of Boulogne and Strasbourg with blood upon his

hands. . . . We will not repeat the extremely harsh expressions he used to brand him; doubtless pity would have softened them after the immense disaster wherein that man was wrecked with the fortunes of France. But we cannot pass over this bitter cry, too well justified by the state of prostration and torpor to which revolutions bring us: "My grief is to see the whole country disown itself by making a choice which is a refusal of choosing when obliged to choose. It is the suicide of a great nation; it disowns its greatness."

But perhaps there were more avowable motives for the choice—for example, the love of military glory, of which Napoleon is our symbol. The military spirit is so deeply impressed on the French character, it is not absurd to believe that it was it which spoke. Upon this Alexis adds, with good reason, what people would not understand in 1848 or in 1852, and what we now know only too well: "This would be very deplorable, very unfortunate. If this were the signification of Louis Bonaparte, then there would open a new era of interminable wars with all Europe."

Another hypothesis: We are not republicans; they want to manage a return to the monarchy; in three years a new constituency will decree the monarchy, and universal suffrage will call Henry V. to the throne. "If this is what they want," Alexis adds, "it is legitimate, and I will cheerfully submit. But it does not make it less deplorable that all those monarchists should be ranged around . . . *such a name.*"

Such were the politics of this fervent and intrepid Christian at a period when it was so difficult to see clearly, and to fulfil without trouble as well as without weakness the duties of a good citizen. Let us acknowledge that he was not so badly inspired by his inviolable attachment to Catholic truth, whose consequences reach far beyond the sphere assigned to it by superficial minds or those of equivocal sincerity.

Ah ! if we were guided by principles, then the world would not see us turning now to the right and now to the left, and our loyalty would never be false to itself, when even it should be put to the rudest trials by the errors and faults of a government we had not chosen and with which we had but little sympathy.

CHAPTER V.

EXPERIMENTS IN EPISTOLARY CONTROVERSY.

In the course of March, 1848, Alexis wrote to his father:

"My Very Dear Father: Your kind and most affectionate letter afforded me great pleasure, and I propose to prove my gratitude by a detailed reply.

"We guessed long ago that you continued in business only for the sake of having us enjoy your success. We understood that tenderness which obstacles could not discourage; but it was just and natural that our affection should be occupied with you who forgot yourself, and that we should wish you to enjoy repose after so laborious a life. We perfectly understood that you were not one of those *empty* men who, when released from the excitement of a business life and reduced to themselves, are reduced to nothing. Your repose, which you would well know how to hinder from being idle, would be sweet and useful.

"It is quite true that you will not have for the reward of your business life even the golden mean, the sufficiency that is neither wealth nor poverty; allow me, to call things by their right names: your greatness of soul will not render the priva-

tion a cruel one. Now that the ice is broken, I want to speak what has been in our hearts for such a long time—admiration for the strength and energy of your character, for your quiet and dignified resignation to your bad luck. We are under obligations to you, dear father, for one of the best examples of that true greatness of soul which is neither the insensibility of stoicism nor the pride of the philosopher who wears a ragged cloak. If respect has hitherto prevented us from telling you what your sons and your friends think, it is perhaps better to keep silence no longer if we desire a less reserved intercourse.

"It is not upon the chances of fortune that I found the hope of greater happiness in our family, but upon our qualities; I believe this is the best foundation."

Evidently the father to whom such a son speaks in this way has neither a small mind nor a vulgar soul. How deeply Alexis must regret that their mutual sympathy, so perfect on all other subjects, does not exist in regard to religion! Until now he has very rarely touched upon this delicate point, and always with a thousand precautions and a visible embarrassment, feeling well that between his faith and that soul so dearly beloved there is a whole world of prejudices. But he will keep up such reserve no longer; he has decided to break the ice. The occasion is favorable; his worthy father, now freed from the bustle of a business life, is not the man to rest idle, and what he needs henceforth to employ the leisure of his old age is a mental occupa-

tion suited to the height of his generous aspirations. What nobler use could he make of his time than to consecrate the larger part of it to the study of religion, which, as Bossuet says, is "the all of man"? Upon this Alexis' plan is made, and without further delay he begins its execution. Let us remember that it is March, 1848. The condition of minds at that period, the confident attitude—too confident, without doubt—of Catholics in the presence of a liberty whose intoxication was soon to produce terrible effects, serves as an introduction to the subject, and leads naturally to the following reflections:

"I hope the cordial and spontaneous adherence of the Catholic clergy to the popular movement will have calmed the enrooted susceptibilities of which it is too often the object. I hope, also, that the men who do not think as we do will cease to regard us as enemies of the state and of liberty. Our state religion was (a singular contradiction) under suspicion in the state; nobody is ignorant of how mistrustful and timorous the legislator has been in regard to it.

"Ought not these fears to be quieted since the pulpit echoes only the word 'liberty'? In Rome, in Paris,* in discourses and writings years before you stirred up revolutions, the Church seemed to have a predilection for this theme of liberty in religion and by religion. Her orators, her most distinguished authors, devoted themselves to this

* Father Ventura, Father Lacordaire, etc.

question. In reading them can we help feeling that they are inspired with the true Christian spirit? can we help seeing those accusations of a tendency to despotism and brutish authority which are made against their doctrine vanish in smoke? Oh! the beautiful, the eternally beautiful task of demonstrating that we owe all liberty, all political prosperity, to the Church, even as we owe supernatural and moral truth to her. I possess neither the learning nor the talents necessary to undertake such a task; it is reserved for some great mind. But I am firmly convinced of the fact. I think, dear father, that this vast field of study will not be without attraction to you. Allow me to mention some works which you can easily procure from the public libraries and which will afford you the first information on the subject.

"There are two ways of treating this matter. The one is philosophical, taking facts in their cause and studying Christian doctrine in its relations to the civil constitution. This method of looking at the question from above easily attains to a majestic dignity, because it moves above events and is unshackled by time, places, and circumstances; it has, moreover, the advantage of being brief, consequently sacred orators adopt it. You have already enjoyed the magnificent funeral orations of Fathers Ventura and Lacordaire; you will not less enjoy the conferences given this year in Notre Dame by the Abbé Bautain.

"We may also with history in our hand verify in the facts themselves the influence of the Chris-

tian religion upon Europe. The long era of eighteen centuries may advantageously be divided into four periods. The first extends from Jesus Christ to the fall of the Roman Empire; the second reaches to Luther; the third to the year 1789; and the last to our day. As to the first of these periods, all good historians prove superabundantly the excellence of the Christian influence; nevertheless, in order that the result may be absolutely unanswerable, it may perhaps be well to also read Gibbon, who, strongly opposed to Christianity, endeavors to prove that it was established in the world by purely human means.

"The second period is illustrated by two eminent works, which are amply sufficient, Guizot's 'History of Civilization in France' and 'Catholicism Compared with Protestantism,' by the Abbé James Balmès; thus, made with a Protestant and a Catholic, the study will be quite impartial. However, the Catholic is a Spaniard, and it will sometimes be necessary to excuse the zeal he shows for his country.

"These two works will also throw great light upon the third period. Nevertheless, you will need to gain directly from the study of facts information concerning what is not treated of in these works; at least, for my part, I do not know of any other books wherein the labor is all done. Finally, since '89, if we do not impute to her the things awkward friends have tried to do for her, religion will come forth stainless, and frequently resplendent, from all investigations. But the fable of the

'Bear and the Lover of Gardens' should not be forgotten by the Restoration. After having seen the throne and the altar which had endured for so long a time fall together, men thought that by leaning the one against the other they would be mutually supported. Grievous error! the throne had the support of the altar, but the altar is the institution of God, and needs no support from human governments.* Whether the state be monarchial or republican, the altar will remain for ever; it is superior to and mightier than all revolutions. Perhaps we needed the Restoration to remind us that the tree of Christianity has its roots *not* planted in the earth, and that no earthly power can either destroy or strengthen it."

We see how Alexis manages; he enters by his father's door so as to come out by his own, and he is extremely cautious not to frighten away that emeritus freethinker. Plainly, it is in consequence of these tactics, necessary, perhaps, under the circumstances, that Gibbon is permitted to figure in such good company on a programme of apologetic studies—Gibbon, whom Mr. Guizot had not thought he could publish in French without accompanying him with notes that are a sort of refutation. But Alexis was not wrong in thinking

* There are in this assertion inexactitudes which Alexis will correct after a while. Because the altar can exist quite alone by virtue from on high, it does not follow that governments owe it no support, no protection, and that the agreement of the two powers is not very desirable. Besides, it must be confessed that under the Restoration the Church had *awkward friends* whose faults were skilfully made use of by the revolutionary Machiavelism.

that Mr. Guizot's own works, provided those of Balmès were added as a corrective, were a good enough evangelical preparation for a mind imbued with the wholly negative philosophy of the eighteenth century. How did Mr. Clerc receive this overture? Probably with rather a bad grace, and the following letter allows us a glimpse of the prejudices Alexis had to deal with:

"My Dear Father: It is now more than eight days since I first sat down before this sheet of paper with my pen in my hand, and yet I have written nothing. The importance I attach to what I want to say to you, and the difficulty of saying it well, are sufficient reasons to explain my dread of undertaking it. But I make an effort, and, abandoning myself to God's grace, I will speak to you heart to heart. Am I not addressing you, my kind father, whose love has made so many sacrifices for me, and after so many proofs of your love shall I hesitate to rely upon its causing you to take in good part what, with a good intention, I may say that is inexact or misplaced? Is not my object to unite our hearts more closely by giving them a more entire conformity one with the other?

"I thank you for your letter of September 27, but permit me to complain that you do not talk about yourself, at least not enough and as I would like. What I want is to be made a sharer of those thoughts which we think to ourselves, which we conceal from the indiscreet and indifferent, which it is so sweet to communicate to a true friend.

"I look in vain among those that are about you;

there is no one to receive your confidences, dear father. You have only your sons, but they are not yet your friends, for you tell them exterior things and not the interior. Ah! well, I beg you to treat us as friends; have no fear, that will not make us forget that we are your sons. I know very well that this confidence cannot be commanded, it must be given spontaneously. Perhaps, however, the first effort will be the last, and you will afterwards find this intimacy easy and natural. How I wish we might seem to you worthy of it, and that we might in every respect deserve the beautiful title of staffs of your old age!

"Would you deem it presumption for us to claim that honor? But have not we also lived long enough to understand the questions that may arise in a soul like yours? What human ambition remains to you? Have you not had experience enough to know that all calculations are unable to guide man to his end? Who better than you knows the instability, the *impalpability*, and, to speak candidly and like a Frenchman, the vanity of all that our efforts exhaust themselves to attain? Finally, when I think of your retired life, without material enjoyments and without distraction, I am sure that you reflect profoundly on those great questions which only the happy can forget for a time.

"Yes, most certainly such is your secret thought, your inmost thought, and it is what I want from you; the rest belongs to the kindness to which I can respond only by gratitude; to this I will respond with all the powers of my being.

"Man's destiny, and the means of accomplishing it—behold the double problem which weighs upon us until we accept the solution religion gives! And there is no way of escaping it, of withdrawing from it; if we are ignorant of our destiny we will fail to attain it, and likewise if we are ignorant of the means of attaining it. To say that man has no destiny is to say that he was made for nothing, and as we cannot imagine that his Creator made him without an object, it is to suppose him created by nothing or by chance. Not to seek the means of fulfilling our destiny is to suppose that means have nothing to do with it, or that we will fulfil it whatever we do, or compulsively, as the earth moves round the sun; and if we are created for an end, our duty is then equally fulfilled by vice or virtue, which consequently are indifferent matters.

"There certainly are some men who defend these follies, but it is not well proven that they believe what they defend.

"Nevertheless, there is no lack of light by which to examine these capital questions, and the number of proofs that firmly establish their solutions is, so to speak, infinite. History, the sacred writings, tradition, are the arsenal where they are stored. One has only to enter; each will certainly find the reason that will determine his consent, at least if he does not stop up the ears of his soul.

"I never forget what you said to me in talking of Father Lacordaire—namely, that in spite of the beauty and strength of his thoughts and the force of his logic, there were many objections to

oppose to him ; but that, after all, it was no easier to oppose objections to a book than to a preacher. It is not astonishing that we have objections to oppose to the truths we are even surest of. There is not one that we most thoroughly hold which is not open to objections on sides where we are not master of it. We must resign ourselves to this and use things as we have them, sow the wheat although we are ignorant of how it shoots up, put the bread in the oven although we are ignorant of how it bakes, and eat it although we are ignorant of how it nourishes us.

"Still, we must not think that by a sort of legerdemain the apologists get rid of difficulties, and by artifice escape the necessity of answering them. I am convinced of their ingenuousness and that when asked they always conscientiously state the difficulty just as it is, their faith, their religion being pledged not to dissimulate. Therefore it is with confidence I tell you that all those objections can be answered, and that you can easily see all it is given man to see. It will be enough for you to simply expose your difficulties to a doctor of our law.

"The Church possesses men whose varied talents and qualities render them useful to the needs of each individual. If there are priests who are not much of metaphysicians, nor much of orators, who only know how to love God very much and to tell men who already have faith how to make it fruitful and draw from it a more and more lively charity, there are also others who are more learned and

more philosophical than the world's scholars and philosophers, who seem to be intended expressly for people who seek the faith they have not, and who suffer from not believing. They are acquainted with all those objections, and know what they are worth. Do not fear to find in them that naked and simple faith which does not desire to see clearly for fear of no longer seeing at all. It is an exceedingly inexact prejudice to imagine that the perfection of a Christian consists in believing without motives. Certainly we must believe—that is to say, admit—things that are not proven; but we must admit nothing save from very powerful motives. If a thoughtless discussion is dangerous, if it is at least useless to raise in the minds of simple and ignorant persons difficulties which their simplicity and ignorance will not allow them to solve, there is perhaps nothing more useful than an enlightened faith that renders a thorough account of itself, and this may be found in numerous priests and apologists. It is what you want. I earnestly beg you, dear father, to read the work of a Mr. Nicolas, entitled 'Philosophical Studies upon Christianity,' which Jules must get for me. I hope that you will discover in it the solidity of the foundations of our belief.

"I cannot tell you how anxious I am that you should share our faith. It is this violent desire which urges me to introduce without your invitation these delicate matters between us. But should I not excite you with my utmost strength to seek happiness where it is to be found? You will not

impute all this to the vain pleasure of playing the wise and learned; you will believe, is it not so ? that I obey the voice of my heart."

It is evident the heart only has spoken, and its eloquence must make an impression on the old man who had such positive proof of the respectful and devoted affection of his noble son. Mr. Clerc does not refuse to set himself to the study, and he affirms that he has not taken sides against the truth. To hear him, he puts no obstacle in the way of grace.

"My dear father," Alexis wrote, "you tell me at the first start all the best that can be told—that you are disposed to yield to grace, that you oppose to it neither bad will nor indifference. Ah ! my God, this is all man can do; it is God who does the rest, and he will certainly do it if you persevere in your disposition, perhaps, and even probably, not by a miracle, but by a gentler means which will respect your will and leave you more of the merit of so difficult a step. Your heart, one day docile to his inspiration, will adhere to the faith, and objections will vanish like fog before the rays of the sun."

But, meanwhile, objections arrive from all quarters. Here is one of them which Alexis gently removes. Had Mr. Clerc read Jean Reynaud ? I do not know, but, like him, he imagined that our planet is not the only one inhabited, and the destiny of the inhabitants of the other spheres seemed to him a problem quite inexplicable from the point of view of Christian dogma.

"Your opinion about the population of the other globes," Alexis wrote, "is in nowise a sacrilege; it is an opinion which one is perfectly free to hold or not to hold. But there would then exist between those intelligent beings and ourselves relations of which we are ignorant, but of which they would not be ignorant, and there would be no difficulty in that. The work of God being a whole, its parts must be co-ordinate, and we are acquainted with matter while it is not acquainted with us."

Mr. Clerc is a deist; natural religion suffices him, and whatever Father Lacordaire may say about it, he does not conceive the necessity of a revelation.

"I come to your profession of faith," Alexis writes to him. "I also recognize that doctrine to be as grand as it is true, and I with the whole Church adhere to it completely. I think with you that it has been, and that it is still, a creed adopted by a large portion of mankind. Many Christian philosophers have been pleased to find it in the traditions of all nations; they have drawn from it a powerful argument in favor of a primitive religion which all the races carried away with them when they separated from their trunk. If, then, Father Lacordaire means by his assertion that said doctrine is, perhaps, historically the one which has the least consistence and vitality, that it is an isolated fact, I am not of his opinion, and I range myself on your side.

"But if he means that it has never expressed itself by any great historical fact, that it is incapable

of doing so, that it is inefficacious, and that it has no fecundity, I range myself on his side. I see no political or social institution that can result from it. On the contrary, I see them resulting from all other creeds."

We omit the developments. Alexis points out the institutions that have sprung from theocracy, Catholicism, etc., and he always returns to this conclusion, one which agrees with history : *Deism is incapable of manifesting itself by institutions.* Moreover, deism, as we are acquainted with it, is not the fruit of reason alone, but owes immensely to the Christian revelation. Therefore he deceives himself who believes he can with impunity disdain the help of that supernatural and divine light.

Meanwhile our young ensign receives new orders. He embarks on the *Pélican,* and the little island of Indret, in the Loire, becomes his habitual residence.

"Now," he writes to his brother, "you ask me what the *Pélican* is, and what it does. Here is an account : The *Pélican* is a charming little iron steamer, not warlike in the least ; it is as useful as it is pretty. Its business is to try the screws used as propellers. We are now at Indret, and we are preparing to take some screws upon which we will experiment at Paimbœuf. The duty that devolves upon me is almost nothing, and I have scarcely anything better to do than to study for my own profit."

We shall see presently whether he wasted his time. This change gives rise to reflections which,

under a playful air, conceal a thoroughly Christian philosophy.

"There, now, I think you are sufficiently posted; I have nothing more to tell you, and if you please we will have a chat. I had made my nest at Brest; I had my habits, my manias perhaps. I am beginning to be something of an old bachelor. My life had little by little filled up with all sorts of obligations, and, without having anything to do, I was very busy. But you know how it is with me; and this is why I so much admire people who are always disengaged in spite of the burden of their occupations, people like Madame Pagès. In fine, taking all in all, I flattered myself that I was in quite comfortable quarters, and I lived tranquil and happy. Why should I not acknowledge it? Cheaply happy, if you will, but nevertheless happy. I would gladly give you a detailed description if I could by word of mouth. Behold! suddenly I have my table cleared; I must construct a new existence to see it in a short time stored away like the preceding one, in the shop where they keep last month's moons. You will make fun of me if I tell you that I have discovered that all things pass away very quickly, and if I talk to you of *the flower of the fields*. What is sure is that sailors often have it in their power to verify this kind of sayings.

"Again, it is sure that when one limits himself to this conclusion he has not advanced very far, and to be logical he must draw from it this other consequence, which is quite as new: it is wise to

provide one's self with a nest that would not be shaken by every wind. This is very well, but the difficulty is to find such a one.

"I was well off at Brest, I am perhaps better off here; nevertheless, I am completely disarranged. What, then, would become of me if I should meet with some misfortune? For a long while I have only labored to advance myself towards that happy state wherein all these events do not affect us, but I have not succeeded."

He found his nest at Indret without much trouble. There was everything for him in being the assistant of so distinguished a man as Lieutenant (now Admiral) Bourgois. Clerc appreciated still more the advantage of finding in that officer a great comformity of sentiments on all essential points. In addition to this, the little island of Indret was a charming abode, where he could satisfy to his heart's content both his need of activity and his attraction for solitude. His windows looked out upon the vast buildings appropriated to the foundry, the forges, the tools, etc., and thence without any other distraction he could follow in the diversity of their labors seven to eight hundred workmen occupied from morning to night in constructing, under the direction of skilful engineers, all the parts of the superb engines for steam navigation. A portion of these workmen formed the fixed population of the island; the others, the greater number of them, lived on the left bank of the river, which was connected with the island by a causeway. A fleet of boats transported from one

bank to the other those who had their dwellings on the right bank, either at Basse-Indre or at Couëron. The director and the higher functionaries of the establishment lived in a château, for Indret possesses a château which goes back to the feudal period, and which, falling into ruins, was rebuilt by the Duke de Mercœur in the closing years of the sixteenth century. In 1650 the queen regent, Anne of Austria, gave it to Abraham Duquesne, who, with a fleet equipped at his own expense, had routed the soldiers of La Fronde and decided the surrender of Bordeaux. But much more ancient and precious memories are attached to the visits of a holy personage to the island, where he built himself an oratory. Hermeland, born at Noyon, in Picardy, towards the middle of the seventh century, was the founder of the monastery of Aindre, situated on the right bank of the Loire, in the district that includes at the present day the parish and corporation of Basse-Indre. Several times a year, especially in Lent, that great lover of solitude withdrew to the little island of Aindrette (Indret), to devote himself with full liberty to prayer and the exercises of penance. Such was the origin of the hermitage, which a faithful historian describes as follows : "This construction is composed of two towers close against one another and built of rough stones admirably cemented together. They are surmounted by an oblong platform representing the figure 8, to which the visitor ascends by a staircase winding round the monument. The platform is covered, doubtless

for the sake of preserving it, with a thick coat of mastic. The two towers communicate from the interior, but each of them has a separate exterior door. From the platform there is a magnificent view—the Loire, the country on its right and left banks, Couëron, Pellerin, Basse-Indre, etc. The eye takes in an immense horizon, a vast extent of territory, a superb sheet of water." *

Previous to 1844 Indret had no church. To assist at the divine offices its inhabitants were obliged to cross the broad arm of the Loire which separated them from their parish of Basse-Indre, or reach with great difficulty the market town of Saint Jean-de-Boisseau, nearly three miles distant. At last the necessity of bringing the helps of religion a little nearer to them was understood. A hydraulic machine shop was converted into a chapel, and shortly afterwards raised to a parochial church. It was blessed by Monseigneur de Hercé, Bishop of Nantes, who placed it under the invocation of St. Hermeland, the natural patron of the island, and of St. Anne, the cherished patroness of the Bretons.

There were schools at Indret—a professional school for the instruction of the young workmen, an elementary school for the apprentices, primary schools for the boys and girls, and finally, an asylum. Alexis found there, as well as at Brest, all he needed to live in imitation of St. Vincent de

* "Indret." By M. Babron, Inspector of the Administrative Services of the Navy ("The Imperial Establishments of the French Navy").

Paul—the poor, the ignorant, and children. To these let us add the sick, for the marshy exhalations on the banks of the Loire engender malarial fevers which prevail in that section from spring to autumn. Is it astonishing, now, if in that little corner of the earth he was able to display a great activity of zeal and charity?

But having his correspondence before us, we might suppose, to judge from the length and gravity of his letters wherein so many questions are brought up in turn and sometimes treated *ex-professo*, that he lived all this time like a Benedictine in the furthest corner of a cell abundantly lined with books. At all events, excursions on the Loire occupied his thoughts less than the reading of St. Augustine and St. Thomas.

Once, however, learning that his father had passed long and wearisome hours at the bedside of his sick brother, he changes his theme and offers an agreeable diversion by writing what follows: "Madame de S—— tells me that Jules is sick. The disease is not dangerous, and requires principally that care should be taken to protect him from the cold. Still, dear father, I hope you will keep me informed. It is not very far from Nantes to you, and I could do my part as sick-nurse. Nevertheless, I imagine you are not too much occupied to read what you asked me about the *Pélican*.

"The steam-screw is made exactly like a cork-screw. Suppose a screw to be attached to a vessel, and that the water resists it as a solid body

would; then the vessel will advance with each turn of the screw just as if it were fastened to an ordinary one that penetrated a fixed nut. But the water, instead of resisting the screw like a fixed nut, yields a little to the pressure it receives, and in one revolution, instead of advancing its whole thread, the screw advances only, let us say, eighty per cent., as if it had advanced its whole thread in a nut which had at the same time recoiled twenty per cent. of the thread of the screw. In this case we say that the screw has twenty per cent. of recoil."

He bravely pursues his demonstration, comparing the pitch of the thread in the screw of the propeller to that of the ordinary screw, and explaining how *a fraction of its thread* suffices a screw to exercise a very efficacious pressure on the water. We will not follow him in this explanation wherein he brings science down to the capacity of the profane, like an amiable and always gay vulgarizer. He concludes with considerations upon the advantages of screw vessels, especially those intended for tow-boats. He says: "This is what we have proved in three voyages we have made to Brest, towing three brigs a great deal larger than ourselves. The *Pélican* kills two birds with one stone: she does a heavy business, while at the same time she studies and announces results which are of the highest importance."

But he does not lose sight of his principal object, and he returns to it as soon as he can, as we learn from the following letter:

"DEAR FATHER: I hope now that our good Jules is not only out of danger, but progressing in a convalescence whose tediousness you are relieving. The faithful watch you keep over him reminds me how you were once my sick-nurse. Jules' good disposition will repay your kind care better than I did. The ill-nature of the patient whom nothing satisfies, and who never thinks that enough is done for him, is not one of the least troubles of the nurse.

"I have thought I might resume our serious correspondence, and that you are not too preoccupied to follow it. I have already another letter nearly finished, which will probably be mailed to-morrow. It is the beginning of an 'Apology for the Patriarchs,' which I translate from St. Augustine. As it will be long, I economize time by sending the translation just as I have first written it, perhaps a little obscure sometimes, and in any sort of French; there will very likely be some misconstructions of the Latin text. However, I do as well as I can. It would be better if I had wholly translated, then revised my translation; then I could send it to you all at once. But this would have been an interminable job, and I do not know if I would have had the courage to persevere. By means of immediate and numerous forwardings I divide my business into little portions which have the advantage of abridging my task. I take it all from the work against Faustus the Manichean. You know that that heresy was perhaps the most criminal of all, and nothing is more legitimate than

the severity with which St. Augustine denounces its sophisms.

"As you are perfectly free from the errors of those unfortunate people, although they made almost the same objections as you on the subject of the patriarchs, you will understand that you must leave to them what belongs only to them which I have not been careful to omit.

"I have equally commenced a reply to Jules, whose long letter proves tangibly his sanitary improvement."

The translation of St. Augustine is accompanied by this short preface:

"Although at first sight, my dear father, your opinion on the subject of the patriarchs may be very natural—and I frankly confess that I held the same for a long time—I have no fear that you will preserve it after the plea I am going to make; and if I am so confident, it is because I take this plea entirely from St. Augustine, and because I shall give you the commentary and development of that passage of the 'Confessions' which seemed obscure to you" (l. iii. c. vii.)

The discussion then is thoroughly on foot. Mr. Clerc reads St. Augustine's "Confessions"; he also reads the Bible; he also reads, pen in hand, the "Philosophical Studies" of Auguste Nicolas; but these readings, to which he lends himself with a certain good-will, he pursues, nevertheless, with the inveterate prejudices of a too faithful disciple of Voltaire. Objections spring up in crowds in his mind, renewing each moment the task of his son

who continues to acquit himself of it with the best heart and the best grace in the world. Alexis had not badly chosen in taking his reply from St. Augustine's lengthy treatise against Faustus; he thus convinced his father that the great doctor was very capable of defending himself, and that his reasoning, sometimes obscure from excessive conciseness, was always just and solid, as could be proved by referring to the writings in which he had leisure to develop it.

We need not say that we do not intend to reproduce Alexis' translation, which fills more than thirty-two pages of fine writing, and embraces almost forty chapters of St. Augustine's work. Mr. Clerc is astonished at such an ardor of zeal; he thinks there is a plan of doing him violence and carrying him off by storm. Alexis has some difficulty in reassuring him.

He writes: "Certainly what I desire more than anything else in the world is to see you share our religious faith, and you are sufficiently acquainted with the Catholic religion to know that if it were otherwise it would be a sign that I had lost that faith.

"You ought, then, to perceive that I do not take a road which seems the shortest in the world to lead you to it. In the first place, I repeat that I have not that pretension. To induce on your part conscientious meditations is what I propose to myself principally; then, here and there some success on isolated subjects. This is almost the limit of my ambition. I know from experience how the

road you have to travel must be gone over; nothing is further from me than a wish to seize upon your will by main force. If you already felt inclined to believe, I should endeavor with all my efforts to determine your inclination; but for the present I keep myself, and desire to remain, although it be more wearisome, in controversy. For we who have for a longer or shorter time rejected all faith, we cannot at once return to a simple, unquestioning faith, which in some sort is unconscious of itself, and is not aware of the difficulties of what is proposed to it to believe; our faith must be conscious of itself, and must not be afraid of facing the greatest difficulties. Its merit must consist in appreciating those difficulties and surmounting them by an effort of the will. All your objections are and will be well received; I would, if necessary, suggest them to you, to the end that your decision, which I sincerely hope will come some day, might be enlightened, firm, and immovable. It is impossible to understand our mysteries perfectly. You will have no more objections to make only when you shall have a lively faith. But notwithstanding the obscurity of the mysteries, notwithstanding the difficulties of the unanswered objections, it is probable that you will some day have enough light in your soul to believe."

Here is a letter in which he talks a little about everything—first about marriage; it is his least anxiety, and his friends tease him to make known what will be his final resolution on the subject:

"I have for the present no desire for marriage, and I have done no more here than lend myself to what an active friendship exacts of me. I have not been able to go to Nantes since I wrote you, and I should be greatly astonished if that plan came to anything, for the reason, among others, that our stay on the Loire will not probably continue much longer. With regard to N—— there is nothing to say, since I am not willing now to contract indissoluble ties. I think you can guess the reasons without my developing them. But if I should marry, I believe she would be a good selection."

The great affair now is the books wherein he can study religion:

"By my letter of Saturday you have seen that in the matter of the books you did right, and although, according to my usual fashion, I acted so as to confuse everything, since I engaged myself before getting your answer, all is perfectly arranged. I had sent to buy Godescard again, but I am very well satisfied that you have bought it. The price they asked me here was 23 frs. and 25 centimes ($4.65); it was the only one that was cheaper in Paris; thus it all happened right. Have the kindness to order it put in a half-binding, which will be the strongest."

So Godescard, bound or not, is in Mr. Clerc's hands, and only waits an opportunity to make the journey to Indret. And just at the proper time behold Commander Bourgois, who is about to take a trip to Paris, offers his services. "But it is

rather heavy," Alexis observes ; "it would perhaps be better not to trouble him with it."

"Besides," he continues, "if you would like to read those wonderful histories of the saints, I beg you to keep them ; I have no urgent need of the book. Moreover, I would be delighted to hear the judgment you will pass upon men so extraordinary, and who are as much further above the greatest heroes than these are above the rest of mankind. Some of them in particular were the sensible organs of Providence in the age in which they lived, and their lives belong to history properly so called. Thus, Mr. Augustin Thierry has produced very pleasing historical works while confining himself to events connected with St. Gregory of Tours. The lives of St. Gregory of Tours, of St. Germanus of Paris, of St. Pretextatus of Rouen, of St. Hilary of Poitiers, of St. Martin of Tours, and of the other bishops, St. Felix, St. Clair, St. Pasquier * of Nantes, St. Cesarius of Arles, and of all the others whose names I do not remember, is the substance of the history of France in those times of the invasion and of the Merovingian rule; it is there that we can best study the spirit of that monarchy constructed by bishops, as hives are by the bees, according to Gibbon's expression.

"Whoever is acquainted with St. Thomas and St. Anselm, etc., is acquainted with the whole

* He was careful not to forget this bishop, who, according to the author of the "Life of St. Hermeland," was the founder of the monastery of Aindre, and placed at its head the holy abbot whose hermitage is shown in the island of Indret.

learning of the Middle Ages. St. Louis, St. Bernard, St. Dominic, St. Gregory VII., sum up their epochs. Finally, if for any reason whatsoever you would like to read them, I beg you to keep them (Godescard's 'Lives of the Saints'*) until I start on a long voyage."

The names were repeated from memory, and somewhat confusedly, which did not agree with a great historical exactness. Mr. Clerc, who noticed this, was delighted to catch his son at fault, and we may guess what was the import of his criticism by the following reply of Alexis:

"My Dear Father: I must agree with you as to the carelessness with which I wrote the names of some of the saints I mentioned. In fact, I do not know if Godescard's work gives them the prominence I attribute to them; and more, I do not know the entire life of each, and I had principally in view that fecundity of the faith which filled our beloved country with saints at the period when its character, its nationality, had birth. Those grand figures present themselves, perhaps, out of their right point of view in a work which offers them all, and which, perhaps, was not conceived as it should have been to suit you best. I am acquainted with some of them from their monographs; one perhaps gets a better appreciation of their grandeur in that way. Still, I believe, after what you tell me, that the chief reason of your judgment comes from the mistrust with which a

* A French translation of Butler.

miraculous occurrence always inspires you, so that by a sort of rebound you do not accept as quite certain even what is not miraculous. It is true that in those histories the natural and the supernatural are found closely connected, mingled, confounded, until it is impossible to distinguish them. With regard to this, I refer to what I have already written you about miracles. I gave to those pages at the time all the conscientious study I am capable of; I judge of them now from a memory which is already indistinct, and perhaps I deceive myself in thinking they answer your present doubts. I add —what probably may be found in some preface or note of Godescard—that all the miracles of the saints are not articles of faith, but those only upon which the Court of Rome has pronounced in the process of the canonization of the saint.* Moreover, the rules of criticism can here be rigorously applied.

"Your parallel between the Abbot Suger and St. Bernard may be wholly to the advantage of the first, without my blaming your judgment in the least, Suger being certainly very enlightened, very wise, very prudent, and meriting very strong praise. But that great man held St. Bernard—I will not say in the highest esteem; he regarded him as a very great saint, as an oracle inspired by God. I recollect a letter of Suger to St. Bernard which breathes these sentiments. He also received

* An error: even those are not of faith, and, in general, no miracle related by historians is of faith; but there would be a great and culpable rashness in denying those which are recognized as such by the Holy See.

with humility and submission the remonstrances of the Abbot of Clairvaux upon his luxury, and thereupon reformed his own house and his abbey. If Suger himself is not a saint, I think he is what is called in the odor of sanctity. He did not want the Crusades. That was natural enough in a minister who believed he did well in exaggerating prudence. St. Bernard preached them. It is doing better still to scorn all human prudence, and to trust only in God, and it is a duty to act thus when we are sure that he commands. But that immense fact of the Crusades is too fruitful a subject of discussion, and assuredly I shall not add new subjects to those we already have. St. Bernard, Peter the Hermit, and the Popes, were not influenced by the spirit of their contemporaries. They directed it; still more, they incited it; and not to regard them as the promoters of those heroic enterprises is to depreciate their part in history. A minister of peace can, nevertheless, exercise terrible justice. Who has said of St. Peter that he was the minister of vengeance and not of of peace because he struck dead Ananias and Saphira?"

As he pursues his theme ideas crowd upon him, and, almost without knowing it, Alexis fills with his finest writing a dozen more pages, wherein, after having expressed himself about the Crusades, he makes an apology for the macerations of the saints; and he sums up his opinions in this final conclusion: "What I want to tell you once again is that the admirable charity of a St. Vincent de

Paul is not a sanctity different from the austerities of a St. Simeon Stylites, the preaching of a St. Bernard, or the missions of a St. Francis Xavier; all these different *forms* of merit are fruits of the same grace, which is their common sap, and their roots are planted in the same soil of benediction, which is the love of God."

Coming from an officer of the navy who has so much other business on his hands, these controversial efforts have certainly their value. They manifest a soul nourished with the marrow of Christianity, and one that daily meditates upon eternal truths. Moreover, though he never makes a parade of knowledge, still less of erudition, he lets us, when the occasion requires, guess at a learning as varied as comprehensive, gathered with discernment from the best sources. With what competence he speaks of St. Bernard! This will surprise us less when we learn that he has read not only the life of the great Abbot of Clairvaux, but also his works (part of them at least) in the original; we might have cited some of his letters in which, commissioning his father to get him a copy of St. Bernard, he descants upon the respective merits of the different editions like a bibliographer who understands his business.

Perhaps the reader has not forgotten how he admired in La Bruyère that chapter on "Les Esprits Forts," where the great thinker of the seventeenth century renders so beautiful a homage to the learning and genius of a Leo, a Basil, a Jerome, an Augustine, and where suddenly he

cries out: "A Father of the Church, a Doctor of the Church—what titles! what gloom in their writings, what dryness, what cold devotion, and, possibly, what learning! exclaim those who have never read them. What astonishment for all who have formed such erroneous ideas of the Fathers when they discover in their works more variety and delicacy, more polish, more richness of expression, and stronger reasoning, brighter flashes of genius, and more natural graces of style, than can be found in the greater part of the favorite modern books which bring fame and vanity to their authors! What a pleasure to love religion and to see it believed, defended, explained by such rare geniuses, such solid minds, especially when we become aware that for extent of knowledge, for depth and penetration, for principles of sound philosophy and for their application and development, for accuracy of conclusions, for dignity of language, for beauty of morality and sentiments, there is nothing, for example, that can be compared to St. Augustine, save the writings of Plato and Cicero!"

To know religion, to love it, to make it loved, and in order to constantly increase in the knowledge and love of it, to employ his leisure in seeing it *believed, defended, explained by such rare geniuses,* was the passion that guided Clerc in the choice of his readings, and was the reason why he did not dread that austerity, that scholastic dryness with which certain works of the holy Fathers are impressed, and which always repel frivolous

minds from them. He was abundantly rewarded, not that he could acquire by himself exact and complete theological knowledge on all points; he did not cherish that illusion, and when he discoursed upon matters of faith he was very careful to accompany his ideas with a reserve, and to invoke as a last resort the intervention of a more competent judge. When he believed the thing possible, he referred to the holy Fathers themselves; it was in this way that he made his father read St. Augustine's "Confessions," and he wrote to his brother Jules: "The attentive reading of the 'Confessions' of St. Augustine will be for a sound and strong mind a sort of tableau of the struggles, the progress, and the victory of eternal truth over the illusions of false wisdom in a great heart and a great mind." He speaks from experience, eternal truth having thus triumphed in his heart and mind for ever. It is a fact that, after having carefully read all his letters and his most private notes, those he wrote for himself alone, I have not been able to find, from the date of his conversion, any indication of a faith shaken, wavering, or even only disquieted by returns of doubt, or of involuntary assaults of incredulity. Far from that, he goes on, to use the language of the Psalmist, *from light to light;* the supernatural and invisible, of which he possessed by faith the intimate consciousness, are become the light and the food of his soul. Most certainly this is a great grace; it is the reward of the efforts he made to know the truth as thoroughly as it could be known by a

mind as richly endowed with natural gifts as his was.

God knows that we have no intention of advising men of his profession to devote themselves as he did to the study of theology and to the reading of the Fathers of the Church. In the first place, they would do nothing of the kind ; and, in the second place, of those who might attempt it, the greater number would have neither the constancy, nor especially the leisure necessary, to persevere in such a course. But no one should think to exempt himself from a care about the great questions of the future—that is, of eternity. Reflect, then : we are embarked on this ocean of time, and the ship sails, always sails, without its being possible for us to suspend or retard its progress for a moment. Where will we be at the end of the voyage—on what shore shall we land ? Before us, yonder whither we are hastening, is there really only the unknown ? Yes, answers the infidel, and he falls asleep upon that response which contains so little to inspire hope or courage. But the believer says that that shore there beyond, though hidden from our gaze, is known to us by faith, and he affirms that God sent his own Son on earth to reveal the mysteries of the future life, and to guide us surely towards the port of salvation. It is well worth the trouble to reflect and examine whether those who have this faith and hope are not in the right. Certainly there is danger of deceiving ourselves ; at some given moment the error, which is of consequence, may be for ever irreparable.

Clerc chose the good part, and he never repented of it. Let his example be a sort of counsel to those who have not yet the happiness of believing, and to whom, if they desire to insure themselves against the dread possibility of an eternal shipwreck, the means of enlightenment will not be wanting any more than they were to him.

CHAPTER VI.

PRELUDES OF VOCATION—PREPARATIONS FOR ANOTHER VOYAGE.

JANUARY 1, 1850, Clerc was promoted to the rank of lieutenant. He had just entered his thirty-first year. Henceforth, thanks to his ten years' experience of the sea, and thanks also to the mathematical knowledge he had found a use for in the workshops of Indret and on board the *Pélican*, the career which lay before him was pleasant, easy, and sure, and he lacked nothing, humanly speaking, to make him satisfied with his lot.

But his heart had aspirations for something more, which he thought he ought to listen to. Did God require him to leave the navy to attach himself more closely to his service? This did not yet appear quite plain, but he was too frank to dissemble the thoughts that disturbed him, too faithful to grace not to be ready for everything.

Being in Paris in the spring of 1850, he spent the week after Good Shepherd Sunday (second week after Easter) in retreat, under the direction of Father de Ravignan. After a mature examination he asked to be received into the Society of Jesus, which he had long been acquainted with,

and towards which he felt drawn. But Father de Ravignan was not a man to be hasty in decisions of this kind. When there had been question of his own vocation, which cut short a brilliant career hardly commenced, being vigorously opposed by his family, he had temporized, while his resolution was not shaken for a moment. He thought Clerc might do the same; and, in spite of the impatient ardor of his desires, Clerc had to wait.*

We have some notes in his handwriting bearing the date of this retreat. First come some reflections upon the Immaculate Conception, a Catholic belief of which we still awaited the solemn definition that four years later was to rejoice the hearts of all Mary's faithful servants and children. Then there are some considerations of a dogmatic character on the eternal fate of the damned, and on the infinite expiation of Jesus Christ, *the common patrimony of all mankind.*

Further on, exactly in the middle of a page devoted to several subjects, is this invocation which casts a light upon the rest: "St. Margaret of Cortona, pray for me!"

Doubtless Clerc during his retreat read the life of that saint, who till the age of twenty-five was a

* Before leaving the residence of the Rue de Sèvres, where he had made his retreat, he was presented to the community, and took leave of them in terms which corresponded well with the desire he had to remain if he had been allowed. The father minister wrote in his journal or *Diarium:* "April 24—Our young officer, Mr. Clerc, finishes his retreat and takes leave of us after having greatly edified us. He warmly expressed his gratitude for the edification he had himself received and the good he believed he had gained from his retreat." This is the only example the *Diarium* gives us of so special a mention, and is a contrast with its usual laconism.

great sinner; and, in the sincerity of his repentance, recognizing that he had commenced like her, he wishes to finish also like her, and claims her for his patroness.

The concluding lines revolve upon these words—*love and suffering.* He has understood that without sorrow he cannot live in the love of God—*sine dolore non vivitur in amore*—and that noble love has with him all the qualities which the pious author of the "Imitation" speaks of in such eloquent terms: "Love feels no burdens, values no labors, complains not of impossibility, because it conceives that it may and can do all things ("Imit.," l. iii., c. v., v. 4, *De Mirabili effectu Divini Amoris*, Challoner's Trans.)

On returning to Brest, where his duties again keep him, he resumes with more fervor than ever his life of austerity and good works. He acts towards the world as a man who expects nothing from it, and who has burned his ships like Cortes. The Feast of the Blessed Sacrament is come. Clerc deems that his place is in the procession following the footsteps of his God, and he escorts the canopy, candle in hand and wearing his uniform. This does not please everybody, and the rumor of it reaches as far as Paris. We may imagine the stupefaction of Mr. Clerc, with his idea that religion should be confined to the precincts of the temple and rigorously forbidden all exterior manifestation. Others besides him, among them some fervent Christians, held the same opinion, and it took a good many hard lessons before they would

at last allow to Catholic worship a little place in the open air. Those who are desirous that it should have a large place are very bold.

Naturally Alexis is charged with exaggeration. He defends himself but feebly, believing that he has his faults, that he is not yet entirely rid of the old man, and that he may spoil by mixing himself with it the good for which he is so earnest. But he will not admit that he is wrong on the strength of reproaches aimed at once against the most authorized practices of the Church, and the examples of the saints which he never loses sight of. To be somewhat of a fool in the eyes of the world does not displease him, for he knows that man saves his soul and gains the heart of God by generously embracing the *folly of the cross.*

We shall discover these sentiments in a letter addressed to his father from Brest :

" As to me, dear father, I can only approve what you say. I have the fault of always wanting to go ahead of others in whatever I undertake, and I agree with you that I ought to try to correct it. Whether the thing itself be good or bad, it is always bad to want to be first. But you know well that place has nothing to do with it. Whether I were in Paris, Brest, or China, I would always have this detestable spirit of vanity. I must fight it wherever I am, on shore or at sea. I can do so better on shore, for I have all the spiritual helps that I would lack at sea. Unfortunately, it is not a small matter to conquer one's self, especially in what concerns pride.

"It is very possible that this detestable sentiment may have inspired a large part of my actions, which, consequently, were good only in appearance; but if it is necessary to purify the intention, it is likewise necessary to persevere in what will be very good when the intention is purified.

"I must also tell you that, if I have no servile and necessary occupations, I have, nevertheless, enough to do, and I am not idle. People are ready to believe that devotees create for themselves a sort of *far niente*, of lazy idleness, where, like the rat, they hide away from all troublesome business, and then, in that agreeable detachment from all the things of the world, some—the monks, who eat well, sleep well, and hire singers to do their chanting for them—grow fat visibly. Others, having their minds always fixed upon one same idea, or, rather, upon the search for a being who does not exist, are sunk like the fakirs in the shadows of an abstraction which destroys all reality. They do me the honor to class me among the second sort—the poor fools who take the thing seriously. But all this is not the truth. There are some ignoble beings who throw holy things to the dogs; there are some religious maniacs; there are some vague and stubborn minds that lose themselves in abstractions. If they have a certain amount of natural energy and enough pride, they are the material of which heresiarchs are made. And, finally, there are some visionaries who dream about nothing, and believe they almost see the substance of the Trinity. With God's grace and by

submission to my guides, I hope to escape these dangers for the future, even as I think I have escaped them up to the present.

"Certainly, meditation is recommended, but nothing is less vague; we must always draw some practical conclusion from it, and we must be much more careful to seek for an affection, a movement of the heart towards God, than for the sublimest mental conceptions. What can be wiser, more prudent, further removed from the culpable state of the visionary, the heresiarch, or the maniac? Our religion is positive; it is not an abstraction. Our God is not vague and undetermined; he is inaccessible and infinite in his essence. It is not well to try to scrutinize the mystery with which he hides himself from our eyes, but in Jesus Christ he is accessible and within our reach, especially within reach of our hearts; and all our religion consists in imitating Jesus Christ and in loving him.

"As to the *excessively exaggerated asceticism*, I am puzzled to know what I can have done to inspire this opinion. It can only have been derived from some conversations. We must not attach too much importance to these. As you know, while not talking absolutely without reflection, I do not always weigh my words sufficiently to be sure that with a little more reflection I will not disavow them. I do not just now remember what I have said to provoke this judgment of me.

"Let the world blame my conduct; it is very natural that it should, and I am not in the least in arrears to it; for, if it blames me for seeking

neither my interest nor my pleasure, I blame it precisely because it does seek both the one and the other. In this matter there is no way of compromising; one says white and the other black; there is only to choose, and my choice is made; but surely this is not what you blame, you who are so little of the world. Let the exaggeration pass, then; I do not say 'Yes' or 'No' to it, for I am in ignorance of what you mean by it, and I would like to know where to lay hold of this new enemy. It is very vague to say that one is exaggerated, but if you will plainly designate what appears so to you, I promise to pay serious attention to it. I think that my conduct during my journey, and my journey itself, proves that I am mistrustful of my own ideas, even when they are directed towards the purest good. Excess is not a good; on the contrary, it is an evil. I wish to avoid it like any other evil. Excess in this matter springs from a presumption which embraces more than its armful, as Montaigne says. It can hold nothing with a firm grasp, and it speedily casts the soul into a disgust and discouragement that render it incapable of the easiest things. But if we must have no presumption we must also have no cowardice, and we must, if we would avoid the greatest dangers, undertake, with our confidence firmly fixed in God, all that is possible to us. Exaggeration has in it something personal, human, which it is easy, at least for others, to perceive. Pure zeal has something holy which reveals its divine origin. But let us stop here."

Meanwhile a new perspective begins to appear in the distance. Clerc, on board the *Duguesclin* which is being unrigged, writes to his father during the first days of August: "I am expecting a more important expedition, which will perhaps take me very far away and keep me a long time; but as no orders have been given yet, I will defer speaking of it more explicitly until I have something positive to tell you."

At the same time—a singular thing—ideas of vocation keep coming into his mind, and assume more and more consistency. This is what afflicts Mr. Clerc, who sees his Alexis, on the one hand repelling all plans of establishment, and on the other pursuing his career with the resolution, already perhaps irrevocable, of abandoning it at the very time it smiles upon him more brightly than ever—a cruel thing for a father who has reposed his dearest hopes upon the head of a tenderly-loved son, and who sees the edifice of his happiness thus crumbling before him.

But there has been nothing done as yet, and he hopes to ward off the blow. He begins, therefore, by attacking his son about his present resolutions, and about that kind of invisible wall he has put between himself and the world, evidently in the hope of one day reaching a positive separation.

Alexis, pressed so closely, defends himself warmly, and makes it clear that he will not yield an inch of ground.

"It was with pain," he wrote to his father, "that I learned from your letter of the 3d that

what appeared to you an exaggeration of devotion was what seemed to me perhaps tepidity, and this on account of the different ways in which we look at things.

"Really I cannot change my conduct in those points that are conformable with my faith. I would much have preferred that you had found something else to scold me for; I could then have proved how anxious I am to please you. It was, perhaps, the foresight that it would be impossible for me to make a concession in that matter which led you to undertake to show me that, even looking at things hypothetically from my point of view, you could see them differently. You refer to your observations on the subject of the attempt I made in Paris to leave the world. I have reread them with great attention, as well as those in the present letter. They may be reduced to two heads: the first that celibacy is a state contrary to nature, and the second that I have a career already secured which I abandon. As I do not remember to have sent you any reply, you will pardon me for this one. If it has not the merit of persuasion it will perhaps have for you that of novelty.

"Marriage is for the species what food is for the individual—it is its means of preservation. Hence it is for the species a natural law, and it is, as your note expresses it, the commandment which God gave in saying to our first parents, 'Increase and multiply.' Thus, I grant, you have quite satisfactorily established that marriage is a natural duty for the species, and that consequently it is right.

But what regards the species does not impose an obligation on all the individuals. Just as in an army, where there must be drummers and color-bearers, it is not necessary that all should be drummers or color-bearers, so with regard to the maintenance and preservation of the species, etc."

The reader sees the consequence drawn : it is not necessary that all should be fathers of family. But allow us to hereupon open a parenthesis.

We are aware of the intimate acquaintance Alexis kept up with St. Thomas, and his habit of having recourse to the great doctor for answers to the objections that came to him from all sides. Here we catch him in the act, and at the moment he writes these lines, original enough, and even impressed with a certain gaiety, he has his St. Thomas open before him, either the "Theological Summa" (2a. 2æ., q. 152, a. 2, ad primum) or the "Summa" against the Gentiles (l. iii., c. cxxxvi.); for it is there we find the distinction of the things necessary to the preservation of the individual and of the things necessary to the preservation of the species, a distinction which gives rise to a reasoning identical with that of Alexis on the subject of marriage, although St. Thomas does not speak of color-bearers and drummers.

This argumentation is, moreover, irrefutable ; and it is curious that, several years later, Mr. Jules Simon likewise employed it in a work that takes only into consideration natural morality. He does not quote St. Thomas, but evidently he has read him, and he writes in these very words: "Not-

withstanding all that may be said about the inclination of nature, nature not needing that all individuals should reproduce themselves, can permit continence to be not only possible but easy." Whence he concludes that it is neither just nor *philosophical* to condemn the state of celibacy ("Le Devoir," first edition, p. 122).

Mr. Clerc, who called himself a philosopher, had then to deal with a strong opponent; his son undertook to pursue him into his own territory and to overcome him with his own arms.

"There you have the philosophical reason," adds Alexis, "but the practice and judgment of the Church are much more conclusive, and you cannot doubt that she highly esteems celibacy. It is not of precept, it is true, otherwise marriage would be forbidden, and, on the contrary, she declares that marriage is a holy state; but it is of counsel, and better than marriage. Assuredly you know that such always has been and always will be the sentiment of the Church regarding this matter. However, your knowledge of the fact will be confirmed by reading the seventh chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

"It is not for the sake of having a controversy that I tell you these things, but I do not want you to be mistaken about my sentiments. We are both agreed that I must *wait*. That decision seemed wise to you and it must be followed.

"How I would like to tell you of the magnificent hopes it allows me a glimpse of. But I would wound your feelings, and, far from filling your

heart with joy, would cause you only trouble and sorrow. Nevertheless you ought, after the prudence I flatter myself I have shown, to believe that I will continue to be guided by it. It is probable that I shall follow the natural course of events, that I shall leave to God to put me, so to speak, with his own hand where he wants me to be, if that is not where I am. I have no purpose of taking upon myself to quit my place by an act of my own will.

"This leads me to reply to your second observation: that I abandon my career. If I abandon it, it is because I am not attached to it. Once this abandonment is voluntary and spontaneous it can be no misfortune. I remain a sailor with the disposition of not being one to-morrow if God so pleases. I assure you that giving up the profession for that reason appears no sacrifice to me."

But Mr. Clerc does not deem himself conquered, and he returns to the charge as vigorously as ever, it would seem, which perseverance procures him an entire letter on the celibacy of the priesthood. However, he refrains for the moment from directly attacking his son's resolution, for the latter adds, after having valiantly defended his thesis: "We have kept outside of the personal question, and we are quite agreed as to what I have to do now—namely, remain a bachelor. You yourself consider this very wise. By my return from this voyage water enough will have flowed under the bridge, and I do not look so far into the future. 'Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.'"

It is, therefore, only a truce, but one to which the long voyage now talked of promises considerable duration. Each of the combatants counts upon resuming hostilities at some opportune time, and gaining more success than in the past.

But what about this voyage, vaguely announced, and which rather pleases our Alexis, although he considers his naval career as nearly finished, and although even the most legitimate ambition seems no longer to have any hold upon him? Evidently this project must not only be agreeable to his tastes, but of a nature to satisfy the secret aspirations of his heart and to put no obstacle in the way of his vocation. And truly God had arranged everything according to his wishes in a manner to give him entire security on that essential point, without his having had to think of and imagine combinations of circumstances which probably would never have presented the same advantages.

A still recent friendship, but one on which he could perfectly rely—a friendship founded on conformity of views, sentiments, and religious principles, consecrated twenty years later by the same vows pronounced at the foot of the same altars—this was what providentially intervened and furnished him the means of pursuing his generous design with an always uniform ardor along a road apparently quite off the route, and which even seemed to be made on purpose to take him far away from his goal.

It was in Brest in 1848 that Clerc met Commander Robinet de Plas, captain of a frigate, his elder

in years and in the service and his superior in rank, but his equal by charity which drew them together. They both belonged to a *club* (such was the language of the day) organized for the officers of the different naval corps in order to withdraw them from *café* life. Clerc, then an ensign, was a member of the bureau and rendered as secretary important services, as is attested by his friend, who recommends us to be silent about the part he himself took in that good work. The commander having been called to Paris, in the course of the same year, to sit in the Court of Admiralty, Alexis hastened to put him in communication with his father and his brother Jules. He wrote to his father with his expansive cordiality: "You ought to have seen Mr. de Plas, captain of frigate. You would have been pleased with him, for he is the finest specimen we could send to Paris. It would not be prudent to buy the whole lot from this sample. I am very lonely here since he is gone, and to console myself for having lost him I have to keep thinking every moment of the good he can do in his new and important position."

The position of the commander became still more important, and his influence still more extended, when the brave Admiral Romain Desfossés appointed him chief of the council of the Minister of the Navy. It was the era of generous projects, and of a policy more Christian than the one we had lately seen at work, and whose weakness we had experienced under the monarchy of

1830. Let that triumphant return of Pius IX. to Rome be remembered ; it was a triumph prepared by the sword of France, and applauded in both hemispheres not only by Catholics but by all true friends of justice and right. How strong we felt then ! A short time had sufficed, on almost the day after a mad revolution, to give us back our ascendency and restore us to our rank among the European powers. Neither our treasure nor our armament was increased by the fall of Louis Philippe ; but we marched the first in the path of honor, and never was our flag more respected than on the day when it bowed beneath the benediction of the Pontiff-King.

It is not astonishing to see at such a period issuing from the council of the Minister of the Navy the plan of an expedition having for its object the visit of the Catholic Missions, to which our brave sailors, according to a truly national tradition, owe a protection which had too often failed under the last reign. Mr. de Plas, selected for this most honorable service, wished to have Alexis with him. We can guess how the latter welcomed the overture made him to that effect. While waiting to enroll himself in the holy militia, nothing could please him better than to be, under no matter what title, the auxiliary of the priest, and especially of the missionary. The news being communicated to Mr. Clerc by Father de Ravignan, Alexis was free to enter into explanations with his father, and here is what he wrote him in a letter dated September 5, 1850 :

"I come now to the project of the voyage. De Plas, in fact, proposed this expedition to me, and, as you may well believe, I accepted with all my heart. Indeed, nothing could please me better. If I am to remain a sailor, there is nothing I could like more than serving the Church as directly as possible.

"Since you have learned the same thing through Father de Ravignan, it must be that it is considered as fully decided upon. As for me, I have had no news about it for a long time. De Plas left for Rome on the 8th of August, and I have received nothing from him since. He undertook this journey to obtain instructions and orders from the Holy Father; but the matter is not yet talked about, and nobody knows of it excepting those to whom I have made overtures to secure their concurrence. The vessel even has not yet been chosen. However, I have a strong faith that the expedition will become a fact. If I do not deserve the honor of forming a part of it, notwithstanding the great satisfaction it would afford me, I think I am disposed to be resigned. As you tell me, it is best not to trust to the most flattering hopes, and this is easy to one who is thoroughly convinced that Providence orders all events for the greater good of his children.

"How happy I should be, dear father, if you could unite with me in appreciating this beautiful project! The history of our beloved country shows it as being always in the past centuries the shield and sword of the Church. Clovis defeated Ari-

anism ; Charles Martel, Mohammedanism ; Montfort, Manicheism; the League, Protestantism. Since the Crusades, in which the most illustrious were the French, the name of Frank is used everywhere among barbarians to signify Christian ; and France, accepting this naturalization, has always taken upon herself the defence of all oppressed Christians.

"Thus, our forces constantly protecting virtue, devotedness, and weakness, the name of France was blessed throughout the earth. It was proclaimed the generous and chivalric nation.' Oh ! that those days might return, that we might understand what is our mission, and how our destiny is the grandest God has ever given to a nation ! In giving us to be the defenders of the Church, of the Popes, of the apostles who bear his Gospel to the confines of the earth, he has made of France the right arm, the temporal strength of his spiritual kingdom. There is not, there cannot be, a more exalted destiny for a state. Our authority should be universal, like that of the Pope ; it belongs to us to protect Christians and missionaries everywhere."

When he received the assurance that the expedition would certainly be made, and that he would belong to it, he fairly jumped for joy, and, borrowing of the Blessed Virgin her song of thanksgiving, he cried out : "*Magnificat anima mea Dominum.*" It is true that in this, as in everything else, he did not see his ideal fully realized ; the plan of visiting the Catholic Missions was subjected to extenua-

tions and alterations, which deprived it in his eyes of a little of its grandeur and of its religious aspect. But enough of its first meaning remained for him to find in it a noble employment of his abilities, and for him to congratulate himself upon being, while waiting for something better, associated with an enterprise from which much might be expected for the prosperity of several important Christian colonies on the coast of Africa and on the different shores of the extreme East.

"I think," he wrote in a letter of October 19, "the end of my waiting is near, and any day I may receive orders to join the ship. It seems they have selected a steam-vessel, the *Cassini*, which is at Lorient, and it is there we will go to make preparations. The cruise may not be what we would have wished; it may perhaps be confined to India and China, instead of taking in the whole world. It is probable, also, that the commander will not be allowed to choose his men, nor all of his officers. Finally, I fear for my part, without knowing anything positive, that too diplomatic an air will be given to the expedition; I would prefer to do things more squarely, and to say quite stupidly that we are going to help and protect the Jesuits. It is true that for France diplomacy and the protection of the Catholic religion are, to people who have seen a little of the world, one and the same thing. I would have liked, however, that they should not have been afraid to proclaim our intention. Circumspection, prudence, is not my strong point, perhaps; I confess that I do not like these con-

cessions to a misled public opinion. Still, I reassure myself by thinking of the chief who is to command us, and with whom, I am certain, this worldly prudence will never degenerate into weakness.

"They say the vessel is admirably adapted to the purpose in many ways; it is almost new; the boilers are on shore being repaired, and after this the *Cassini* will be ready for a long voyage. But this will take some time, and I venture to say that it will be about three months before we can sail.

"I am not quite sure what will be my business during this time, whether I shall be occupied with the equipment of the ship, or shall devote myself to acquiring the knowledge that will enable me to bring back from so fine a voyage documents interesting to science. I am ready for whatever de Plas wishes; in any case, I joyfully await the moment of making myself useful. I am not too much afraid of inaction, and *ennui* scarcely ever torments me; but my uselessness weighs upon me, and I am rather ashamed of living with so little trouble."

God knows whether he was idle or not; and as to living with little trouble, if he was exempt from this through the moderation of his wants, he knew how to give himself for others as much and more trouble than people who are stimulated by their own interests usually take. But this was nothing compared to what he wished to do, he being one of those who, after having conscientiously performed their task, render themselves justice by saying:

"We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which we ought to do" (Luke xvii. 10).

And now comes a first attempt of Clerc, endorsed by the commander of the *Cassini*, to give the projected expedition as Catholic a character as possible. Alexis was acquainted with the Rev. Father Rubillon, provincial of the Society of Jesus in Paris, the same who has since been assistant for France in Rome. With full confidence in the zeal and charity of that worthy superior, he writes to him under date of October 19:

"Reverend Father: I thank you from the depth of my heart for your most affectionate letter. I now undertake this long cruise with a feeling of perfect security, and in the hope that God will make it serve to his glory and our spiritual profit. Commander de Plas offered in Rome to take on the *Cassini* a delegate from the Holy Father to examine and judge of the condition and wants of the universal kingdom. The Ministry has itself made the same proposal to the nuncio in Paris. It is probable that a plan which seems so advantageous to the Church will be accepted; still, it is not certain. However that may be, this delegate, who, perhaps, will not be a Frenchman, may have visits to make which will keep him absent from the vessel for long periods, the vessel being for him only a means of conveyance, and you understand, Reverend Father, that we want a priest for ourselves; therefore we have recourse to you.

"The law relative to chaplains does not apply to vessels like ours; we will be rejoiced at this

misfortune if we can derive from it the advantage of having a Jesuit. As the Government will have nothing to do with this choice, it will quite willingly keep itself ignorant of what does not concern it.

"The Father shall mess with and be provided by the commander; we claim all the other expenses, and we will endeavor to return him in as good condition as when he was delivered to us. In our difficulty of doing more and of securing to our chaplain the same emoluments as though he were legally and *administratively* embarked, it is only a priest who has made a vow of poverty, and whom his order will take back after the expedition is over, who can suit us. This consideration will perhaps influence the Bishop of Vannes, from whom the chaplains that sail from this port receive their faculties, to waive his right of appointing a priest of his diocese, and grant readily to a Jesuit Father what could not be accepted by a secular priest.

"But if the exterior difficulties seem easy to overcome, there must, however, be weighty reasons to induce your Society to relinquish a Father for three years to so small a number of the faithful as compose the equipage of the *Cassini*—130 men.

"Well, in the first place, the vessel will fulfil her important mission so much better in proportion as the men will be more religious, and it is certain that their progress in piety will not be useful to themselves alone. But the principal reason we have to offer you is that the vessel will in reality, as was said at first, make the tour of the world,

and that, consequently, the Father you will give us as our chaplain can at the same time be your visitor-general, doing for all your houses near the coasts what, I understand, is done in your different European provinces. Thus the Society will itself derive some profit from what will be to us such a very great advantage.

"Reverend Father, I address you this request in the name of Commander de Plas; he will be in Paris on the 28th of October, and will see you himself relative to it; but as some delay may be required to decide the matter, he has desired me to write to you in order not to lose time. We expect the vessel to be ready to sail by the end of December.

"I beg you, dear and venerated Father, look favorably upon this project, in which we are equally jealous of our own good and of that of the Society. It is clear that the selection of a Father for this double function of chaplain and visitor belongs exclusively to your Very Reverend Father-General, but de Plas has told me to mention, without in any way insisting upon it, the name of Father de Sainte Angèle, who is, he thinks, at Dôle.

"I pray God to make you favorable to our plan.

"Your most respectful and dutiful son in our Lord Jesus Christ, A. Clerc."

What a spirit of faith and what a heart of an apostle! What respect for all proprieties, especially for the proprieties of the religious life! We

feel that Clerc's filial submission to his venerable correspondent is not a mere empty phrase, and that without being bound by vows he finds in it a foretaste of religious obedience. All, however, was not to be to the liking of Commander de Plas so ably seconded by his lieutenant. The *Cassini* did not make the tour of the world, and no Jesuit embarked in her. But this double disappointment was compensated by the presence of two venerable bishops, accompanied by several priests, and by the services which the expedition, having once reached China, rendered to one of the most interesting of the Jesuit missions in that extreme East.

The preparations were long and laborious. The officers were recruited quietly, without any open preference, and the choice was as fortunate as could reasonably be expected, taking into account the administrative obstacles.

"The *Cassini* is not yet ready to start," Alexis wrote to his brother Jules early in November (1850); "her boilers are still on shore, and it will be a month before they can be put in place; our departure does not seem to me possible before the beginning of January. The *Cassini* is a vessel very similar to the *Caïman;* she has already been tried by a voyage which did not injure her in the least and tested the quality of all her belongings. The engine is a good one, and has been thoroughly inspected and made equal to new.

"We will set out with a good many passengers of all descriptions, even nuns and bishops—the new Bishop of Bourbon, where until now there has

been no bishopric, and Mgr. Vérolles, bishop of Mantchooria, who has already suffered for the faith.

"The cruise attracts many naval officers, and it would seem that the shadow of cassocks, as Mr. Hugo expresses it, does not sufficiently obscure the future of the *Cassini* to make it dreaded. Notwithstanding our little odor of Jesuitism, people seem quite well disposed to become our associates; it is, however, a perfume that diffuses itself without any effort on our part, for we live very quietly, I and my colleague, Bernaert, and, it even might be said, in a diplomatic reserve, if our tranquillity were not the effect of our personal tastes."

This Bernaert, the second lieutenant of the *Cassini*, was an experienced seaman and a valiant Christian. At fifty years of age he had petitioned to sail as supplementary officer—that is, holding the lowest rank—but a decision of the Maritime Prefect, which he had noways provoked, restored him his right of seniority. Not less generous than modest, although he was without fortune, he gave largely of the little he had; for instance, on his arrival in China he gave 600 francs to the Procurator of the Foreign Missions for the work of the propagation of the faith, saying that he had not come to that country to economize. He was, we are told, an officer who only lacked the occasion to rise to the heroic and who lived like a saint. Once returned to private life, he withdrew to a town of the Department du Nord (Steenvoorde), where he

died a few years ago, leaving behind him the reputation of a most upright man, and an example which his fellow members of the conferences of St. Vincent de Paul have not forgotten. Such a man readily sympathized with Alexis. Before their departure they went together every morning to the early parochial Mass, and together they approached the holy table, a worthy preparation for the kind of maritime crusade to which they had so gladly consecrated themselves. Clerc went on board the vessel every day to inspect the progress of the work and to superintend the arrangements, putting to profit the experience he possessed long since, thanks to his voyage on a ship of the same kind, the *Caïman*.

A striking and instructive contrast! When in 1847 he was cruising off the western coast of Africa on that steam corvette, which did a good deal of transporting in the interest of our establishments of Senegal, he felt little liking for that kind of service, whose monotony but poorly responded to his warlike and chivalric aspirations, and, including in one same anathema steam and transportation, he wrote to his father with a facetiousness that was just a little caustic: "In short, since I have been on board we have taken in coal, then loaded with baggage, burned our coal, reloaded, reburned coal, etc.—always the same thing over and over again. That's the life of an officer for you! Now we are, I believe, relieved from loading for some time, for there is nothing more to be loaded. If you had since my departure gained the

ear of some influential personage, I would tell you how vicious it is to employ the navy in this way; that steam vessels require sailors to manage them, but that on board of them it is impossible to learn anything of the profession; that the young officers ought not to be attached to steam vessels, and that using them as transports makes of their officers mere carters, teamsters, etc." He had the most exalted idea of the naval service, and his predilection at that time was for navigation by sails, witness certain memoranda on the *chasse des vaisseaux* which were found among his papers. This, we are assured, is a beautiful and ingenious mathematical theory, but of which the application is impossible in steam navigation. However that may be, charged on the *Cassini* with the details of the engine, he utilized in that employment knowledge of a quite different nature which he had acquired on the *Caïman* against his will, so to speak; and contrary to his expectations, *to burn and reburn coal* for the honor of France and in the interests of Catholic missions became the great joy and, as it were, the crown of his naval career.

Thus in the last days of 1850 we find him wholly occupied in collecting precise and detailed technical information upon the different qualities of combustibles that could be used on the *Cassini*. The School of Mines affording the most abundant resources for that study, Alexis wished to profit by them, and came to Paris for the purpose. This journey procured him the acquaintance of a man whose friendship, though enjoyed so late, was in-

finitely precious to him and marked an epoch in his life. Who has not heard of Commander Marceau, that noble Christian with whom our young lieutenant had so many points of resemblance? Both entered the navy through the Polytechnic School; both escaped a great danger, strangers as they were to all religious practices; both, also, from the time of their conversion aspired unceasingly to what was most perfect, and had no other ambition than to gain for God adorers in spirit and in truth. Marceau's history is well known; it is simple and beautiful, like his character. A nephew of General Marceau and sole inheritor of a name that figures so brilliantly in our military annals, he thought on leaving the Polytechnic to take a rank in the army, to which his tastes called him, and where the antecedents of his uncle seemed to promise him a splendid future. But in some sort he was not free to follow his inclinations. A superior officer asked him: "How can you think of entering a career wherein a relative of the same name has distinguished himself? You should aim at an independent and personal glory." Urged on all sides to join the navy, he yielded. "And so for twenty years," he remarked to a worthy priest in 1849, "I have been wandering over the sea without either liking or disliking it. Providence had its designs. I could not have done for the missions the little services I have been permitted to do if I had not been a sailor."*

* See "Auguste Marceau, Captain of Frigate, Commander of the *Arche d'Alliance*," by one of his friends.

The little services he speaks of with such Christian humility would pass for great ones in the eyes of any other than he, and if we consider what they cost him they are simply heroic. To devote himself to that work, whose importance he fully understood, he sacrificed his future, his repose, his health, and, to a certain point, the consideration he enjoyed in the service. When it was known that he had sent in his resignation in order to take command of a merchant vessel, and that at the very moment he was about to receive the epaulets of a captain of corvette, it was feared he had lost his senses. "Why, you are crazy!" one of his friends said to him. "Yes," he replied; "humanly speaking, I am crazy; but I hope that by faith my folly will become wisdom, for I work by faith and for faith." What victories had he not to gain over his natural pride when he constituted himself a beggar and alms-collector for the Société Française de l'Océanie, exposing himself to be treated as a sharper, or but little less than one, while at the same time he was noways deceived as to the thousand chances against the success of the enterprise? But there were thousands of souls to be saved; without him, without the cruise he proposed to make in the *Arche d'Alliance*, the poor islanders of Oceanica would have to wait a long time yet for the visit of the missionaries, and several young Churches would suffer. He did not hesitate; setting out in 1846, he returned to France only in 1849, and when Clerc met him in Paris it was already nearly a year since, sick, worn out, aged before his time, and

satiated with disappointments of all sorts, he had become for those who were capable of appreciating holiness one of the grandest examples offered to the respect and admiration of our century. Animated by the same sentiments, and fully disposed for the same sacrifices, how greatly Alexis must have enjoyed the conversation of the noble sailor who had realized, in a certain degree, the ideal that he himself, together with the commander of the *Cassini*, was then cherishing! Marceau's great idea was the creation of a religious navy. "An impossibility!" the world exclaims. Undoubtedly if the Government refuses any assistance, the difficulty will be almost insurmountable; but if it is propitious there will not be wanting men of good will to undertake every two or three years an expedition similar to the one whose history we are about to sketch; and if the French flag should thus travel along all the coasts of the universe, appearing everywhere as a sign of concord and peace, and carrying in its folds the *good news*, we may believe that its glory would not be dimmed. Marceau died; he spent the remnant of his failing strength in a retreat made at Notre Dame de Liesse under the direction of the Rev. Father Fouillot. Here again is an unexpected similarity. It will be in this same community (transferred to Laon) that Clerc, twenty years later, will pass the last year of his life (1869–70) in the exercises of the third probation, which are to prepare him for martyrdom. God united them only for a moment on earth, but he reserved for them something better than that—

he had made those two great hearts for one another. Oh ! how Marceau must have welcomed our Alexis when he saw him, in his turn, landing on the shores of eternity decorated with the stigmata of victory !

At the close of January, 1851, Marceau left for Tours with his mother, and some days later Alexis heard of the death of his friend. He hastened to console, by sharing her grief, the poor mother whom this separation plunged into mourning. She was a woman of strong faith, but who had not always been such ; by an unusual and touching exchange of parts, she had received from her son what most sons owe to the lessons and example of a Christian mother. Here is her letter, which Clerc preserved as a relic, and which we were delighted to find :

"J. M. J.

"FEBRUARY 18, 1851.

"It was yesterday, my dear sir, that I received your kind letter, and before opening it I conjectured all its contents. The thought of you, of Mr. de Plas, and of good Doctor Montargis has, so to speak, been constantly present to my mind ever since the fatal blow struck me. I saw, in the few moments that I had the pleasure of your acquaintance, all the affection he bore you, and I could not doubt of the sympathy he found in you, and I felt a sort of consolation in thinking that your tears would be mingled with mine. Alas ! it is not for that dear and good son I weep, for I have the sweet confidence that he now enjoys in the bosom of God the happiness he has promised

to his faithful servants; but it is for myself, the poor old mother who had still so much need of his counsel and example. Nevertheless I will exert all my efforts to put in practice the example he gave us in his submission to the holy and adorable will of God; daily I ask this grace of God as the most precious legacy of my excellent son.

"As I am quite sure, my dear sir, that this letter will be the last you can receive from me before your departure, I shall relate some of the circumstances that preceded my Augustus' death, at the same time requesting you to communicate them to Mr. de Plas. You two will henceforth be joined in my memory, and my prayers will accompany you in the long and laborious expedition you are about to undertake.

"It was on Tuesday, as you know, that we left Paris. Your dear friend bore the ride well enough; only he began to suffer from the cold about fifteen leagues from here. At last we arrived, and the feeling of happiness he experienced in finding himself at home again seemed to make him forget the fatigue of the journey.* Wednesday he was very feeble, which I thought was a natural consequence of travelling. He retained some kinds of food, others he rejected. Thursday was not so bad; he retained almost all the nourishment he took; still his weakness increased, and he noticed it himself. The night of Thursday was a bad one; he had frequent spells of raising blood.

* Marceau's sister lived at Tours with his mother.

Friday was much worse, inasmuch as he suffered greatly from suffocation, and the physician whom I had called on Wednesday had deferred coming again until Friday, and then he did not come until late in the evening and after I had sent for him twice. Oh ! how I then regretted not having asked that kind Doctor Montargis to accompany us ; he would not have refused me. I know he could not have cured Augustus, but he would certainly have alleviated his sufferings. However, God had ordered it otherwise, and I desire, after the example of my dear son, to repeat: 'Blessed be his holy name !' Friday night was not so bad as the preceding one. He rested very well and retained the little nourishment he took towards morning, but complained of suffocation. Towards eight o'clock this increased and he sat up. I then proposed to him to rise to have his bed made and to refresh himself ; he consented, but without seeming anxious. I arranged everything, and during this time we talked, his sister being with us. I told him I was going to write to the doctor to ask him to come. That seemed to please him. He said to me : 'You will also write to Father Fouillot ? It is he who has put me in this state, therefore he ought to pray, and get others to pray for me.' It was then nearly nine o'clock. He told me he was ready to return to bed. I approached the fire-place to get the shirt I had put there to warm, when my daughter uttered a cry. I turned and saw the poor fellow in a horrible convulsion. I tried to make him inhale salts and swallow some water of La Salette ;

my daughter sent quickly for the physician; I told her to send also for the priest, who did not delay coming. The superior of the Ladies of the Presentation, of whom he is the chaplain, followed him and bestowed upon my Augustus all the spiritual and corporal help in her power. The convulsion being over, extreme unction was administered; at each unction the dear boy asked pardon of God. After Holy Communion the Sister cleansed his mouth, he blew his nose himself, then she made him take two small spoonfuls of meat jelly, which he seemed to like. After this, with that gentleness and kindness which you know belonged to him, he looked at the Sister of Charity and said to her: 'Thank you, Sister, thank you.' This marked improvement continued about half an hour. I acknowledge, dear sir, my son had so many times repeated to me that Almighty God would perform a miracle in his favor and cure him that just then I believed it was to be so. But my hope was quickly destroyed. A second convulsion, much more frightful than the first, seized him, and at half-past eleven his beautiful soul was in the presence of God.

"At that moment the smile returned to his lips, and his features, contracted by his horrible sufferings, became calm and beautiful again. I saw him the next afternoon, more than twenty-four hours later; he was not at all changed and seemed in meditation. I embraced him, saying *au revoir*, for I rely upon his obtaining for me the graces I so greatly need in order to deserve to join him some day.

"I do not doubt that these details will be precious to you and Mr. de Plas, and I have found in the thought that I could thus testify my gratitude for the affection you both bore my Augustus strength to write them. As for me, dear sir, though Almighty God has struck me in what I held dearest, I know not how to thank him sufficiently for all the graces he has deigned to bestow upon me, not only by preparing me for the greatest of sacrifices by a retreat, but also by permitting that dear and good son, who since his return to France had led so wandering a life, to come to die with us, so that I might take care of him at the last, and might have the sweet and precious consolation of praying at his tomb. There I do not doubt I shall obtain precious graces; while praying for myself I shall pray for you, dear sirs; I shall ask him to obtain for you all the graces you need, to place you under the protection of our holy Mother whom he loved so deeply, and to bring you some day, if that be in the decrees of Providence, to pray with me over his tomb.

"As there is nothing I am more anxious to do than to satisfy your pious wishes, I send for you and Mr. de Plas two books, two medals, four pictures, and a bit of the cravat he wore in his last days; I have selected these objects from among the most worn of his things, as having been more used by him, thinking that thus they would be more precious to you. I add a copy of 'Canticles for the Month of Mary,' and a 'Litany of the Will of God' which we ought after his example to try to

make profitable; finally, you will find in the parcel a tiny lock of hair.

"I cannot conclude without mentioning the kind, the excellent Mr. Montargis, who, after having bestowed so much care on Augustus' body, took such extraordinary pains the last week to procure Masses and prayers for his soul.

"Farewell, kind friends of my son. Pray for the aged and unfortunate mother who promises you her sincere affection. Yours in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary,

"MARCEAU, SERVANT OF MARY."

Marceau's mother signs herself *servant of Mary*, because she belonged to the Third Order of the Society of Mary. If Marceau had lived, he would himself have finished his days in that society, bound by the vows of religion and consecrated by holy orders. This was at least his ambition when it pleased God to put an end to his exile and crown his merits, which were far in excess of the appreciable results of the work to which this man of desires had sacrificed himself.

CHAPTER VII.

ALEXIS CLERC LIEUTENANT ON BOARD THE "CASSINI"—FROM LORIENT TO SHANGHAI.

On the 6th of March, 1851, at seven o'clock in the morning, the *Cassini* left the harbor of Lorient, and, reviving an ancient custom fallen into disuse since the first revolution, saluted with all its artillery the sanctuary of Notre Dame de l'Armor. At the same time the missionaries who were passengers on board intoned the "Ave Maris Stella," which the whole ship's company sang with marvellous earnestness. Priests and sailors united in one same thought of faith, supplicated the Star of the Sea to be propitious to their voyage, and to bless the very diverse enterprises which separated them from their country—these for several years, those, or at least the greater part of them, for the remainder of their lives, which they had entirely devoted to the salvation of souls.

It was an august and touching spectacle. On the deck were seen two bishops—one, Mgr. Vérolles, illustrious by long labors, was returning to his vicariate-apostolic of Mantchooria; the other, Mgr. Desprez (now Archbishop of Toulouse), was on his way to inaugurate the bishopric of Saint Denis (Island of Bourbon), that is, to take possession of that see of which he was the first bishop.

Two vicars-general, three priests of the Foreign Missions, a chaplain attached to the *Cassini*, and, finally, three nuns of St. Joseph, destined also to carry afar the name and the good odor of Jesus Christ, loudly proclaimed by their presence the entirely Catholic character of the expedition. The staff of officers, excellently well chosen, exceeded somewhat the strict regulation number, and included five lieutenants, one administrative officer, two physicians, and six midshipmen, four of whom had been selected from among the best cadets of the school-ship.

The *Cassini*, a corvette with a screw-propeller of two hundred horse-power, carried six guns and counted one hundred and twenty men, officers included, which equipage would, in case of necessity, form quite a respectable military force. The *Cassini* was bound for Bourbon and China.

The duties of chaplain (without the official title) were discharged by the Abbé Cambier, of the clergy of Paris, who, to join the expedition, had voluntarily left the parish of Saint Pierre du Gros Caillou, of which he was curate. Having been appointed some years since pastor of Saint Jacques and Saint Christophe de la Villette, he in the kindest possible manner has loaned us the journal he kept during that cruise of the *Cassini*, solely for the sake of pouring out his heart into the bosom of a friend.

Furnished with the faculties which his Lordship the Bishop of Vannes had granted him for the entire cruise, and installed as comfortably as was possible

in his floating parish, the Abbé Cambier, after having made the acquaintance of his new flock, formed his first impressions, and consigned them to his journal as follows : " The sailors seem young, and with not much experience of the sea ; but they will soon learn, and things will go on the better for it if Providence deigns to favor us ever so little. Besides, all these sailors have good faces. As they are Bretons for the most part, the priest does not frighten them ; they are accustomed to seeing him close by, to listening to him and following his advice. Therefore I can expect docility from them. The cabin-boys are only six in number, and they will be my little pet flock. Are not these poor children left too much to themselves and allowed to mix too much with the crew ? At their age the free conversations they hear may be fatal to them. To separate the cabin boys from the men as much as possible, to watch them with scrupulous attention, to instruct them, would seem to me a necessary thing. It is to be supposed they they are not neglected ; experience will doubtless inform me about this. The men number a hundred and twenty ; they will be my harvest ; may it prove a good one ! Without any doubt I might say that it will, had I as my only pledge and guarantee the example of the commander and the officers. Were I not already convinced of the power of good example, I should soon become so on board the *Cassini*. I have said that Mr. de Plas is a good Christian ; he knows that he has under his authority not only bodies but souls, and he makes of the navy much

less a means of advancement for himself than an opportunity of exercising his enlightened zeal in favor of those he is appointed to command."

Then Abbé Cambier says a word about each of the officers: "His first officer—that is, the one who is called the lieutenant in command, because he has supreme control of all the details of the vessel—his lieutenant-commander, I say [we know that it was Lieutenant Bernaert], is likewise a Christian of the good old stamp. His body is enfeebled by long and hard service, but his heart is young and vigorous. He has undertaken the Chinese expedition only to offer his assistance to the missionaries; his boxes are full of religious objects which he destines for them; one of his intentions is to propagate the Society of St. Vincent de Paul; also to organize a conference on board, if possible."

Abbé Cambier is careful not to forget the subject of our biography, and this is how he expresses himself: "Lastly, I must say a few words about the youngest lieutenant, Mr. Clerc, a pupil of the Polytechnic School. An officer selected by the commander, his piety and talents justify the choice. If he continues in the navy I think his future will be prosperous. He is but twenty-six years old,* and is already a lieutenant. The career before him is a long one; he has in his favor youth, health, and merit. I would not be surprised if he should exchange the coat for the habit; his fervor

*Clerc was then past thirty-one; his low stature and his habitual gayety probably made him appear younger.

is that of a religious. Undoubtedly, the epaulets are very honorable; the priest's cassock is far more so, but it must be given by God with the vocation. . . ."

The worthy chaplain informs us how he exercised on board the vessel a ministry that was wholly of peace and persuasion, that imposed on the men no constraint and no annoyance: "In the morning, after the reveille, at six o'clock at sea and five o'clock in harbor, I said prayers—'Our Father,' 'Hail Mary,' and a prayer I had composed for the sailors. When the furnaces were lighted I descended to the engine-room and performed the same devotions there. In the evening, after the reading of the penalties of the day and the choice of hammocks, I said night-prayers in the midst of the men, all-standing and with heads uncovered. On Tuesdays at half-past one there was catechism for the cabin-boys; Sundays Mass was celebrated at a quarter-past ten; it commenced with the 'Asperges,' and in harbor there was an instruction on the Gospel of the day. At sea, at two o'clock Sunday afternoons, I gave an instruction to the crew. A few strokes of the bell announced all these exercises, and those only came who wanted to, even to the morning and night prayers."

Not only was the Christian life thus freely practised on board the *Cassini*, but Jesus Christ himself had his throne erected, as was proper, in the place of honor. "Yes," says Abbé Cambier, "we had a real chapel on our vessel—a chapel perfectly appointed with altar, taberna-

cle, crucifix, presses for the vestments; a chapel where we had the happiness of possessing the Blessed Sacrament. If you have occasionally visited some vessel in one of our ports, you must be acquainted with the part called the *poop*. It consists of one or several rooms built on deck, either aforeships or, and more frequently, aft. On ships and frigates this poop is used as the parlor and office of the commander. On the *Cassini* it was in three divisions. The right and left were appropriated to the two bishops; the centre one was the chapel, closed with folding-doors, which were opened for the celebration of Mass. The interior was finished in pine, veneered with varnished lime-tree wood. On the front of the altar were some symbolical ornaments carved in violet ebony. The crucifix that surmounted the tabernacle was of walnut wood; it was not cut by a sculptor, but only by an humble joiner who plied his trade in the port; yet it was not less a little *chef-d'œuvre* as well as the whole chapel. The artisans of Lorient had bestowed upon this tiny chapel all their skill, and success had crowned their efforts.

"If I were talking," adds the good and worthy priest, "to a Christian without faith or understanding of the things of faith, I would not enter into these details, but I know that it will be a pleasure to you to hear them, and that my words will find an echo in your heart. Was it not for us all on board the *Cassini* a wonderful good fortune to possess the Most Blessed Sacrament? Around and above us the sea and the sky displayed

the power of God; close to us, with us, the Eucharist revealed his goodness and love. Is it astonishing that the waves bowed down, so to speak, before our vessel to allow it an easy and rapid progress? Is it astonishing that peace reigned constantly in our midst, and that numerous blessings were reserved for us? The *Cassini* bore in her bosom the God of the universe, he who walked on the Sea of Galilee, and who with a single word stilled the tempests!"

The voyage was, from beginning to end, a most pleasant one. It is true that at starting the sea, which was rather rough, tried some of the passengers, but in a little while the weather became very tolerable for the season, and, after a six days' sail, on the 12th of March the vessel cast anchor off Funchal, one of the Madeira Islands. The stay lasted three days; coal was taken in rapidly, and a supply of fresh provisions permitted the *Cassini's* company to reach the Cape of Good Hope in the best of health. "On Easter Day* the corvette was near enough the Cape to warrant an unusual consumption of coal. The order was therefore given to put on all her steam, and the *Cassini* attained a speed of about ten miles an hour. The sea was smooth as a lake, so nothing prevented the plan of having a High Mass from being put in execution. Mgr. Desprez was very willing to officiate; some cabin-boys, nicely dressed and intelligent, were turned into choristers, and, thanks to the mission-

* I am here following, or rather faithfully copying, from the notes of Commander de Plas.

aries, to the nuns who were passengers, and to a lieutenant who was a good musician, the singing left nothing to be desired."

Alexis Clerc wrote from Cape Town to his father: "We arrived here April 22 at two o'clock in the morning, after a very fortunate voyage, during which we escaped all bad weather and all the other miseries of sea life. Easter Day was a real festival for the ship; the weather and the sea were perfectly beautiful. It is not very difficult to touch the simple hearts of these good Bretons, but it is sweeter to remember those happy moments than to talk of them."

The preparation of the sailors had been most careful, and their chaplain's efforts were crowned with complete success. "I told them," he relates, "that confession was for them the plank of safety after shipwreck; the word once said, I repeated it; they grew accustomed to hearing it; it ended by sounding less harsh to their ears, and soon after it found an entrance in their hearts. When the thought of Confession is in the heart, and is there in such a way that it cannot fail of being understood, it is not long before it is put in practice. This is precisely what happened on our vessel. The sailors began by badgering one another about it, and finished by confessing. Our Holy Week was entirely taken up with piety."

Another religious solemnity awaited them at the Cape. Mgr. Griffith was preparing for the dedication of his church; he anticipated the ceremony by several days, so that the pomp might be in-

creased by the presence of the two bishops and of the numerous clergy of the *Cassini*.

The commander and his staff were also invited, and once more showed themselves sincerely Catholic.

"Day before yesterday (Monday)," Alexis wrote to his father,* "the bishop of the Cape dedicated his church. The *Cassini* took part in the festival; it was represented by its clergy and by a deputation of officers and sailors. Our two bishops and our seven priests added greatly to the pomp of the ceremony, and a 'Regina Cœli' and an 'O Salutaris' were sung with very good effect. The French consul had the first place in the ceremony; the officers of the *Cassini* ranked with him. It is thus that everywhere, excepting at home, we are Catholics. But how much better it is not to be so through necessity and from political interest—as the English are Protestants—and to bring to the true, inborn opinions of our race that adhesion of the heart which proves us to be sons of those who founded the power and glory of France!

"The English are now establishing a regular communication between the Cape and England. It will be very rapid—thirty-three or thirty-four days; several packets have already made the passage in that time; propellers are the style of vessels employed. When the project is completed the Cape will be only

* Let us remark, once for all, that the greater part of Alexis' letters during this voyage being addressed to his father, we shall not continue to mention this each time, being careful, however, to inform the reader when they are addressed to any one else.

a way-station, and the packets will go on to Mauritius, then to Ceylon ; others will go to New Holland. We cannot help envying this energy and enterprise, and, if England's object was not at the price of such great efforts to sell her cotton-goods, we would have to bow before a superiority laudable in its end as well as in its means. . . . That commerce should be not a means of greatness, but *the* greatness of a country, is impossible, and the nation that applies to such small interests so considerable a power will one day be judged from this point of view."

The *Cassini* left the Cape May 3. The month of Mary was not forgotten. Every evening, when the sun had disappeared beneath the waves, all gathered like one family before Mary's altar, erected in the chapel on deck, and there they prayed with their whole hearts, and sang with loudest voices canticles of praise to the august Mother. Sailors and passengers were very fond of a refrain that was remarkably appropriate to them :

> " Exilés de notre patrie,
> Nous voguons au milieu des flots ;
> Soyez notre étoile, ô Marie !
> Soyez aussi notre repos."*

Thus they reached Bourbon May 21. Mgr. Desprez landed the morning of the 22d ; saluted by the *Cassini's* guns, he was received on shore by the commander of the troops of the garrison, Lieuten-

> * " Exiles from our country,
> We wander o'er the waves ;
> Be thou our star, O Mary !
> Be likewise our repose."

ant-Colonel de Cendrecourt; after this he was escorted processionally to his cathedral, where he took possession of his see according to the canonical forms. Alexis wrote: "The ceremony was very beautiful, both by reason of the august pomp of our religious solemnities and of the immense concourse of people that welcomed a new authority whose paternal tenderness and tutelary care they foresaw without understanding it. But the bishop's allocution, in which he traced his plan of conduct and its object, was the crowning joy of the festival, because it revealed all his charity in a simple way, and showed him by a few words what our constant intercourse with him on shipboard had taught us he was." A shadow, however, fell upon the picture. Referring to a newspaper article, "which would have been perfectly well placed in the *National*," Alexis adds: "How sad to still see what is most exalted in the social scale giving an example not only of indifference to our holy religion but of positive aggression. Is not a country where the government, the administration of justice, and the system of education are anti-Christian, very near being a pagan state?"

Another letter turns upon the Madagascar mission and the hopes of colonization to which it gave rise. We feel very plainly the true ring of the French spirit in this familiar talk:

"It would seem that they are trying there (in Madagascar) a new system of colonization, or, to speak more exactly, without any system they are pursuing a course which the nature of things indi-

cates, but which is new. There is no purpose of reducing the natives to servitude, nor of destroying them by war because they are warlike; they are to be taught and themselves made the colonists of their island. There are at different points Jesuit missionaries, untiring laborers, who are the means of this new plan. It has not, I repeat, been systematically adopted; it is followed because it is possible. The present governor of Mayotta, who exercises authority over the other possessions, is a superior man who seems to thoroughly understand the position. The climate of Madagascar is murderous to Europeans; the missionaries have made Bourbon their hospital; they go there weary and feverish, stay long enough to restore health and strength, and then return to combat until death. Their hospital is at the same time a college; they have there about forty young Madagascans, little negroes who in spite of their color look like good children. They teach them reading, writing, religion, and a trade, and, once grown to manhood, establish them in homes. If these people do not love a country which sends them such devoted masters, who at the price of their own lives —for the missionaries always end by leaving their bones on these foreign shores—teach them to live physically and morally, they are very ungrateful. If they did but know how different are the usual methods of colonization, what would they not say in our praise!

"Meanwhile, in the vicinity of this college the Sisters of St. Joseph rear to labor and virtue about

forty little Madagascan girls, probably the future wives of the forty boys. The plan is well under way, and the poor islanders, who are without malice or guile, are all capable of letting themselves be led like children when they shall see the fruits of Christian civilization. Alas! why are there so many places in France where the sight would be as novel as in Madagascar?

"I delight in dwelling on the idea. As the children are still in the hands of their teachers, I speak only of my desires, of my hopes, of my dreams if you will. But even if the success should not correspond to the hopes it would not lessen the merit of the enterprise. This is what I love in our generous country: she uses her superiority to protect, not to subjugate. Here the field is small, it is true, but it is not less a noble use of her power. Other nations may be, and are generally, more skilful colonizers; they know not how to be, like us, true civilizers."

Towards the middle of June the *Cassini* had to think about resuming her voyage to India and China. The Abbé Cambier had embarked only for Bourbon; for a moment, however, he hoped to be able to defer a parting which only to think of broke his heart. If the corvette *Eurydice* had arrived a few days later the worthy chaplain would have stayed with the *Cassini* as far as China. The time for the departure of the latter vessel was very near when a French war-vessel was signalled at the lookout of the master of the port; an hour later a second signal indicated her number: she was the *Eurydice*.

"I saw at a distance this corvette approaching," he wrote in his journal, "and the sight troubled me. What was going to happen? 'My God,' I murmured, 'dost thou exact of me a new sacrifice? Grant me strength to accomplish it!'

"June 15," Abbé Cambier continues, "towards ten o'clock a boat came from the *Eurydice* to the *Cassini*. A midshipman climbed on board and delivered to the commander a packet from the commander of the station. This packet was nothing less than an order to pass from the *Cassini* to the *Eurydice* in quality of chaplain of the naval station of La Réunion, and that within twenty-four hours. All objections were useless. God demanded a sacrifice of me. I must obey him; would that I had done it in a manner more meritorious for heaven! Tears were shed on both sides; as for me, I wept the most, . . . and when the moment of parting came it was not only tears but sobs which my broken heart could not contain.

"The next day but one the *Cassini* weighed anchor and steamed out of the harbor of Saint Denis. I had not the courage to witness her starting off. When I went up on the deck of the *Eurydice* there was still visible in the far distant horizon a column of smoke. . . . That smoke came from the *Cassini's* engine, and there was nothing more needed to make my tears flow afresh. I descended to my room, and that day was one of the saddest I ever spent from the time I was old enough to be acquainted with sorrow and heartaches."

These lines, which we would not have omitted,

are the highest praise of the *Cassini*, and they will not be read without exciting a respectful sympathy for their writer, who was capable of loving souls with so tender and pure an affection in the Lord.

July 14 the *Cassini* anchored before Acheen, the capital of a kingdom of the same name situated in the extreme northwest of the island of Sumatra. The object was to obtain satisfaction for the very inhospitable welcome given to a Neapolitan ship, the *Clementina*, whose captain and first and second lieutenants had been victims of a terrible treachery, accompanied by robbery and pillage.* Clerc was sent in a boat to find the sultan and his capital. Geographers speak of a city of twenty thousand souls, of a fleet of five hundred sail, of an army of sixty thousand men who, with the same number of Hollanders, besieged Malacca. He saw no vestige of all this, and asked himself if it were not a fiction. Nevertheless, nothing is more certain than that in the sixteenth century the sultans of Acheen were strong enough to drive the Portuguese from the island, and that at that epoch they received embassies from all the states of Europe. There is a sequel to the tale: since the visit of the *Cassini* that fallen power has restored the honor of its flag, and quite recently the Dutch were twice obliged to renew their efforts and reinforce their troops to escape being compelled to retreat before it. What our compatriots saw in 1851 gave them

* The thieves had stolen to the value of about twenty-two thousand dollars, of which the commander of the *Cassini* demanded the restitution.

no presentiment of such a revival of energy and warlike spirit.

Clerc's first business on landing is to procure an interpreter ; he finds one who knows a few words of French, and engages him for want of a better. Then he sets about hunting up the sultan, discovers his palace not without difficulty, and obtains an audience. Hardly has he explained the object of his mission when the Malayan monarch commands to be taken from a casket a case, and from this case a paper certifying the cordial friendship existing between the sublime sultan and the Emperor of France, Louis Philippe. "Not exactly knowing," Clerc says, "how to express my respect for that sovereign document, I solemnly kissed the paper, and to the questions asked me about the king I was very happy to be able to reply that he was dead ; for to make that worthy sultan understand that we discharge our kings with less ceremony than other people do their servants, seemed a task too hard for me ; he would have believed himself to have been outwitted and that his paper was of no value."

The next day there is a solemn audience given to the commander of the *Cassini*, who is attended by a numerous staff. When the sultan is asked what he will do to punish the criminals who are men of Dahia, he replies, after repudiating all participation in the crimes they are charged with, that he can do absolutely nothing.

The interpreter being inefficient and the sultan badly disposed, Commander de Plas and his officers

withdraw somewhat dissatisfied. The following day, after an exchange of presents, the *Cassini* leaves for Poulo-Pinang ; there a more skilful interpreter is procured, and the supply of coal replenished ; then, returning to Sumatra, the vessel passes Acheen without stopping and drops anchor in sight of Clouang.

"There is nowhere," Clerc writes, "a country more beautiful than this ; its landscape is irregular, and the richest vegetation covers all the mountains to their very summits ; the trees crowd on the sea, so to speak. We passed close to the shore. Clouang in particular is remarkable for its beauty. The anchorage is between a rocky islet and a high, wooded hill ; in front of us is a low and fertile shore where a river has its outlet ; the river, as well as the island and the country, is named Clouang. A little distance inland other hills rise from the plain and indicate a fertile and well-watered country."

From Clouang they repair to Dahia, and there the interpreter and seven men are sent on shore to present to the rajah a letter in which the commander declares that he wishes to arrest the guilty without striking the innocent. The two culprits being really found at Dahia, as soon as the interpreter has returned to the ship a couple of boats are armed, and Clerc, at the head of a force of fifty men, is charged with the capture of the Malay chief who committed the murder. Let us leave him to describe this little expedition himself :

"We found an extremely rapid current at the

bar of the river; the waters were swollen by the rains (occasioned by the southwest monsoon). For two entire hours we struggled vainly against this unexpected obstacle, and all the while within a pistol-shot of the shore; but I had already seen enough of the Malays at Acheen not to be frightened at that; moreover, the current would have quickly carried us out of their reach if we had needed to escape from them. During the long struggle once I ran my boat on a coral reef which forms the bar and renders the current so rapid; I was already just above it; we were in the greatest danger of being filled with water and dashed to pieces; the boat was tossed from side to side. But the sailors remained calmly in their places, and the Hand that protects the *Cassini*, with a single little wave rescued the boat, which, impelled by the current, overleaped the bar and returned to the assault of the river. At last we stepped on shore. I sent six men with a midshipman to form an ambuscade, and, having provided for the guarding of the boats, I started with the rest of the men for the fort of Kerjéroun-Siadom. To enter this stronghold cost us only the trouble of opening or forcing the doors; there was nobody within. We next went to the murderer's dwelling; again nobody. Then I heard the reports of muskets; my search was ended. I returned uneasily to the shore and found my ambuscade, who, in spite of positive orders not to fire unless they were attacked, had levelled at the fugitive. Fortunately no one was wounded. We crossed the river and paid

an equally unsuccessful visit to the other culprit, Etadji-Malot. After this we returned to the ship. The next day before leaving we burned the houses of those two men." To shorten the story, when the sultan learned what had taken place at Dahia he became more tractable, and shortly afterwards he bound himself in a written agreement with the commander of the *Cassini* to pursue with all the means in his power the cowardly aggressors of the *Clementina.*

The Neapolitan Government, informed of what had been done to inflict an exemplary punishment on the criminals, sent the decoration of *Saint Georges de la Réunion* to Mr. de Plas and the cross of the *Mérite de Naples* to his lieutenant. Alexis never wore that badge of honor, which reached him in France at the moment when he was laying aside his uniform to be clothed with the livery of Jesus Christ.

After having again touched at Poulo-Pinang and made a stop at Singapore, the *Cassini* entered the China Sea, and towards the end of August she anchored in front of Macao, a city already almost entirely Chinese, and the gate of the Celestial Empire. All along the route Clerc had met quite a large number of Chinamen ; he had seen them at Bourbon and Sumatra, as well as at Poulo-Pinang and Singapore, and he had admired their remarkable facility for establishing themselves according to their own fashions and carrying China with them everywhere. But in Macao he saw them *in gross* and at home, and his observing mind regard-

ing them with attentive curiosity, he was struck with their original and somewhat grotesque physiognomy. This weakness is pardonable in a thorough Parisian such as he was. At the very first glance at the Macaons he had a veritable explosion of hilarity, and his laughter resounded as far as Paris.

"I want to say a few words to you about the Celestial Empire, at the gate of which we now are. I have not seen a great deal of it, but I have seen persons who are better acquainted with China than the Chinese are themselves, Father Huc, whose work you have read, and other missionaries who have met with similar adventures.

"In the first place, the most exact model of a Chinaman is the representation seen on what we call Chinese screens. It is enough to make one die laughing to meet the originals of those comical portraits. Travellers are not all men of veracity, as we learn when we visit distant countries with their descriptions in our hands; but fortunately no traveller ever invented the Chinese queue. It must certainly be for the sake of dissipating the melancholy of foreigners that they all carry about this singular appendage. Note well, it is not one of those little rat-tails such as are worn with *ailes de pigeon* (a way of arranging the hair); these are queues of magnificent development and reach down to the ankles. The Chinese are quite capable of fraud; therefore I believe that there are many queues ornamenting heads other than those that raised them; but in general

the Chinese have abundant hair. Finally, whether their queues belong to them or not, they turn them into cravats when they are in the way.

"Grotesque as he is, the Chinaman is a keen, active, and economical merchant, and also an artisan who cannot be surpassed. His character is a most remarkable one. He lives on a little rice, wears garments of very small cost, and, we may say, unites in his person the most marked contrasts; he is lazy, and at the same time very active, very sober, and very gluttonous, very ingenious and very circumscribed; but he is especially cunning and insinuating. A great fuss is made about the settlement the English have accomplished at Hong Kong; I fear the profit of it will not be theirs. Unquestionably, the great mandarins who, after having enriched themselves, run the almost sure risk of being exiled or impoverished, if not worse, will be only wise to jump into Hong Kong, which is so near by, and purchase a palace.

"The English, it is true, understand colonization perfectly, and they have discovered that its first condition is that the colonists live in the pursuit of what they call comfort; while we are only camped in our colonies they are regularly at home, and they are right in a great measure; these climates debilitate us only too soon. But in Hong Kong they have exceeded, in my opinion, what is well, and have built a city of palaces. A certain commercial house, for instance, has expended in the construction of its counting-rooms 150,000 piasters (the piaster is worth here six francs

twenty-five centimes). It will require an immense business to cover such advances and the general expenses of the future. Foreigners—English and Americans, with scarcely an exception—are engaged only in extensive commercial transactions, and everything else is done by the Chinese. But I believe that these last are the white ants of the city and that they will undermine it."

What strikes him more than all the rest is the superiority of the Chinese in retail trade and little tricks of trade. "The grocers of Paris, to whom wicked jesters have given a queer reputation, are only school-boys compared to them. The skill of the Chinese in the mechanical arts is most remarkable; it is astonishing to see how cheap their bamboo work is."

But his judgment of them as a whole is less favorable: "All these petty qualities do not constitute even a petty virtue, and, in short, they are a miserable people who never have been and never will be able to rise from artisans to artists; who do not possess and never will possess virtue, military or civil courage, and who from their petty learning will never attain to science; who live in the degradation of a paganism of the most material, the narrowest, and the most foolish sort, while for more than two hundred years Catholic priests have not ceased to evangelize them."

To this rather unflattering portrait Clerc adds certain less disagreeable features in the following letter, also dated from Macao (November 29, 1851):

"If there is an extraordinary spectacle for us, who

push our eagerness for adventure and our thirst for novelty to the horror of anything traditional, it is unquestionably this immovable people, who live in stupid adoration of custom, usage, even when they feel and recognize it to be bad. Politically and philosophically, this is the characteristic trait of the Chinese nation. It is also the secret of its life, and it cannot be gainsaid that China is a clear demonstration of the great importance of stability in institutions. This is the cause of China's conquest of all her conquerors. For certain persons—to whom the word country signifies but little more than the soil they tread, and who understand country as something independent of the glories and institutions of the past—this remarkable example should be the best proof that it is precisely here that the source of the longevity of nations is to be discovered."

The life Clerc led at Macao was not at all idle; he knew how to find occupation everywhere, and he had with him his books, his dear books, his "Summa" of St. Thomas, St. Bernard's works in Latin; and what besides? certainly a part of Bossuet's works—witness a blank-book filled with his writing, bearing this heading, "On board the *Cassini*," and containing a very full analysis of the "Connaissance de Dieu et de Soi-même."

"The *Cassini*," he wrote, "is, since my last letter, anchored off Macao. The events which you want me to note for you are consequently of very little importance. Ours is the ordinary life on shipboard—exercises of all sorts. However, I

must tell you that I have a great joy which I hope you will share. It is that all these labors are not sterile, and that the ship begins, and justly, to be proud of herself. She can flatter herself that no enemy of the same size would find it a trifle to attack her. I say this the more willingly because *all* [the word is underlined by Clerc himself] the honor of it belongs to the commander, who is the most accomplished of chiefs."

Like a good Christian, Commander de Plas returned a large proportion of this honor to his lieutenant, Clerc. We are not competent to decide this question between them, and we can only positively state that they lived in perfect harmony of opinions and acts, which doubtless had a great deal to do with the very satisfactory result whose merit each generously attributed to the other.

Clerc's religious zeal found ample occupation on board of a ship where the *personnel* was admirably chosen, but where there were several, especially among the younger officers and the cadets, who needed to be strengthened in the faith and gently drawn to practise it. Before everything else our lieutenant preached by example, and the great charity he showed toward his comrades inspired them with a regard that added much efficacy to the insinuations of his zeal. "As soon as we cast anchor in a port," naval officers who sailed with him relate, "and permission to go on shore was given, Mr. Clerc would offer to replace the officer *on watch*, so as to leave him free to take immediate advantage of a privilege so dear to all sailors. And

when Mr. Clerc went on shore himself, if we followed him at a little distance we were sure to see him enter a church directly, for his first visit was always to God."*

His piety was abundantly satisfied during his stay at Macao, for the Lazarists had their procuratorship in that city, and the Sisters of Charity had been established there for some time. There were also two Dominican Fathers, who acted as procurators for the missions of their order in Cochin China. Alexis was not slow in making friends with the Spanish and French missionaries. During a second sojourn at Macao, the Lazarists being gone to Ning-po (June, 1852), he formed a close intimacy with the Spanish Fathers Ferrando and Fuixa, and had the satisfaction of finding in them men who joined rare learning to solid piety.

One of those religious, Father Ferrando, was good enough to come on board the *Cassini* to celebrate Mass. He came in all weathers, and even when the sea was very rough. Lieutenant Clerc served the Mass in uniform, after having made the boat's crew which he commanded file around. He preserved this custom during the whole cruise, even when there were among the passengers Brothers of the Christian Schools quite ready to replace him, an employment for which their habit seemed better suited than his. Speaking of this, the commander of the *Cassini* adds very appropriately: "The bright mind and the boundless chari-

* Testimony gathered by Father Thébault from two officers on board the *Erigone*, in 1855.

ty of Alexis Clerc, who was always anxious to oblige his comrades, rendered possible to him what in others would have been perhaps the occasion of teasing, if not of quarrels on the part of the officers. In his case there was never anything of the kind."

Commander de Plas may easily be suspected of being a little partial to his beloved lieutenant, therefore we will invoke the testimony of a much younger man who was then a simple cadet midshipman on the *Cassini*. In early youth we are very observing and seldom sin through excessive indulgence.

"As soon as I had the opportunity of knowing Mr. Clerc," this last witness tells us, "I saw him just as he was during the entire cruise: active and vigilant as an officer, unaffected and amiable in his intercourse with all, master of himself, faithful in the practice of his religious duties, and this without ostentation as well as without human respect. His walk had then contracted something of his interior dispositions; he had the firm step of a man who has a great end to attain and a long road to travel. As a general thing his eyes were modestly cast down."

What follows anticipates the sojourn in China, but that is no matter; what we are searching for now is the man, his character, the harmony between his sentiments and his life:

"While we were cruising about, when, on our arrival at a port, there was a dinner or a party given to us, Mr. Clerc avoided attending as far as

was in his power. Still, if there was a duty to be fulfilled by going to such entertainments, a service to render, he yielded gracefully, and took his place in society with that gayety and amiability which did not forsake him even in the sad captivity of Mazas. He rarely went on shore for amusement; he was most frequently in his cabin working and reading. It was thus he made a trial of the new life of renunciation he desired to embrace."

These lines come to us from the Chartreuse of Reposoir, in Savoy, where Mr. S. de G——, who sends them, is, after having attained the rank of lieutenant, finishing his career among the children of St. Bruno. An unusual and singular coincidence! Those three sailors, of different ages and rank, Mr. de Plas, commander of the *Cassini*, Alexis Clerc, his lieutenant, and Mr. de G——, a cadet midshipman, all three were a little sooner or later to put off the liveries of the world and consecrate themselves to God in the religious state. Two Jesuits and a Carthusian!—not bad for a single état-major! Clerc was the only one of the three who at that time was nearly decided upon his vocation. He found himself, as is plain to see, in good and worthy company; and he was not deceived when, before embarking on the *Cassini*, he told whoever wanted to know that he was going to make a first novitiate.

During more than a year the *Cassini* was unable to leave Macao, where she had anchorage, except to return for long stays that were without utility to the mission she had received when departing

from France. This inaction, so contrary to all they had promised themselves, to all they were still resolved to do, was for Commander de Plas and his generous companions the severest of trials. The news which reached them from the interior was not of a nature to calm their impatience. China, they could not doubt, was in full revolution, and a prey to all the evils of civil war. The insurgents, favored by a certain awakening of national spirit, not only held the imperial troops in check, but gained ground every day, and menaced the Tartar dynasty with complete ruin. On their side the imperialists did not in anywise respect the guarantees made so many times in favor of the Christians, and we had every reason to demand of them an account of the grave and recent infractions of the late treaties. Whatever might be the issue of the struggle, France, whose part is to protect moral interests especially, might be the arbiter of the situation. What England had done a few years before in the interest of her commerce—the immoral commerce of opium—could not a great Catholic nation do with a hundred times more honor for her missionaries and their neophytes? If we avoided interfering in the internal politics of the Celestial Empire, there remained for us to fulfil a duty of humanity compatible with the strictest neutrality, and nobody in the world could prevent us from acting as the police of the coast where all the scum of the neighboring provinces gathered, and where, amid the pitiful confusion of the local authorities, there prevailed an unrestrained

brigandage which was free to commit all kinds of outrages with impunity.

To command a ship of war armed with good guns, to be able to land excellent troops the mere sight of whom would put to flight the evil-doers, and with all that to be, by orders, reduced to immobility—it must be confessed that for French sailors whose hearts were in the right place this was a cruel mischance.

The commander of the *Cassini* could do nothing, for so long as he was in the waters of Macao all his movements depended on the commander of the station, his superior officer. Had this last full liberty of action, and did his instructions leave him with hands untied? We are unable to say. Let us in passing note only this one thing: Too often our brave sailors, after having hastened to take an energetic part dictated by honor and duty, have been poorly rewarded for their zeal, and the government has not always spared them the most painful disavowals. What is there astonishing in their declining, when the opportunity offers, a responsibility always burdensome, and which is not without danger? And then—another cause of weakness—our perpetual revolutions, our sudden changes of governments and ministries, is the thing of all others the best adapted to disconcert those who have the honor of representing France, and managing her interests at some thousands of leagues' distance from Paris. Only just now, as we have seen, Alexis Clerc was greatly embarrassed in presence of the Sultan of Acheen, who showed

him a treaty of alliance bearing the signature of King Louis Philippe, and he was careful not to inform that Asiatic monarch that Louis Philippe, *discharged as people discharge a servant*, had died in exile, leaving behind him the republic. Ah! well, from small to great, it is always the same thing every time we gratify our taste for revolutions, and the *Cassini* experienced it once more during her long anchorage at Macao; for the republic of 1848, vanquished in its turn, gave place to the empire prepared by the *coup d'état* of December 2. To men who had received their mission from a ministry that was serious and honest after all, and to which the noble Admiral Romain Desfossés belonged, the news of what had taken place in Paris had in it nothing encouraging, and the first impression it produced must have been most painful. Here is one example among many others: In Canton and Shanghai great hopes had been founded upon the action of an experienced diplomat, Mr. de Bourboulon, who was charged with exacting the observance of the treaties agreed upon between France and China, and very probably with obtaining something more. But at the announcement of the *coup d'état* this high functionary expressed himself in such terms that everybody considered his recall as certain. Fortunately, when the situation was made clear, matters all turned out for the best; Mr. de Bourboulon remained at his post, and received with the title of minister plenipotentiary new powers which he understood making an excellent use of. But French

diplomacy had not the less been completely paralyzed for a time.

Alexis' first letter after the news of the *coup d'état* bears the date of February 2, 1852. This is what he says on the subject :

"We heard of the *coup d'état* of the president of the republic only through the foreign journals, which seemed to us very poorly informed, probably on account of the suppression of the Parisian journals. No letter or paper has reached us. All our packages await us at our central station, Macao, and we shall go for them immediately.

"I would not have liked to belong to the army of Paris during that audacious usurpation. As to the universal suffrage which follows to absolve such pretensions, I have not waited until now to decide that it is a miserable criterion of right; nevertheless, we must undoubtedly stand by it if the great majority of voters take part in it. In the chaos and anarchy in which we are tossed about, this suffrage seems to me, in so far as it does not attack the divine law, the single point, not of right but of fact, which can indicate wherein resides the government of France. But all this, like the government of February, whence the republic issued, is, in my opinion, of the nature of governments of expediency which we should obey for what they are worth—I mean so long as there is nothing better; yet, withal, I do not acknowledge to myself the right of disobedience or the duty of quitting the service unless their acts force one to it. I should therefore remain in the service, even if I were in France

where my resignation would be possible, instead of being here where it is not. But I shall not take any oath of fidelity to this new personage.

"Jules' habit of spending the month of December in Germany allows me to hope until I hear that you are both safe and sound.

"I do not give much credit to the accounts we get, and they are too brief for us to judge much from them; but, from what they say, I am quite puzzled to know with what men the president will govern.

"It is my idea that this prince will be the heir of the policy of his uncle, and that their destinies will be very similar; the first was the reaction against the Jacobins, this one is selected to combat the socialists. There is still a fine *rôle* for him to play. I have not the confidence that he possesses either the will or the force to fill it." This was looking far ahead and seeing surely. Unfortunately such clairvoyance was not common. France, thirsting for authority, did not limit her confidence in a prince whose past was anything but reassuring; a theorist as bold as he was deep, always ready to recommence his life of adventure by risking, now not only his liberty or his head, but the fortune, even the existence, of the country that had taken him for its ruler, and hailed him as a providential man!

A letter of March 27 contains the following lines:

"My Dear Father: We are going to Macao to take advantage of the departure of the express.

My last letter is from Batavia. While there we received news from Europe up to December 26, and heard about the kind of consent which universal suffrage has given as a sanction to the *coup d'état* of the president. The foreigners we have since met all have the air of believing that it is an improvement in our condition. For us there will be, even if we derive profit from it, a sort of shame in being fallen so low that it did not need a Cæsar of nobler alloy to conquer us."

And a letter of April 13: "You speak sorrowfully of the presidential proscriptions. Without much pitying the pretended victims, I deplore that severity dictated by the seven million five hundred thousand votes. But I am disgusted with the kind of spurring on certain newspapers give it. There is no longer necessity of exciting the governing power to rigor; it is sufficiently armed not to need the feeble support of the voice of a journalist."

A reflection slipped into the following letter is not without value, at least as an argument *ad hominem:* "I see by your letters that you deeply regret the republican government. While reserving my personal opinion, which is of no weight in the matter, it seems to me that the basis of republicanism is universal suffrage, and that the most intense republicans are the ones who, after the repeated votes of December and the elections to the Legislative Assembly, should most thoroughly regard the new government as legitimate."

When he wrote these lines Clerc had just returned from a voyage to Manilla, enchanted with all he

had seen, and in particular with a colonial government which was not the less civilizing for being not in the least republican.

"It is, I think, the model of all colonies established or to be established. The Spaniards have infused into the Tagals their dominant qualities, attachment to the faith and the military spirit. If we did not see the rather dark color of their skin, we might, from the manœuvres of the troops and their firm tread, suppose we were looking at European soldiers. Their bravery has been often tested, and has never failed when they have been under the command of Spanish officers. By a coincidence which may appear singular, the Spaniards have found Mussulmans for their enemies here, and they fight against the *Moros* just as they did in their own country under the famous Isabella." The *Moros* in question are only the Malays of the Soloo (or Solo, as the Spaniards call them) Islands, brigands of the sea, who practise piracy along all the coasts and carry whole populations into captivity. In the last expedition of the Philippines against these corsairs the regular troops were joined by volunteers recruited, instructed, drilled, headed, and commanded by their parish priest, Father Hanez, of the Augustinians. "They manned a fleet," Clerc relates, "which at San José was united with that of General Urbiztondo. I can easily imagine the joy this reunion must have produced, and the confidence the general must have felt in the execution of a project in which the people so heartily co-operated. This little cru-

sade, thanks to the simplicity of the crusaders—who had no suspicion of the beautiful title I give them and which they deserve—and to the watchful care of their pastor, offered a model of a Christian army. They performed all their religious duties as though they were at home. When the day of action came, Father Hanez, who always commanded them, led them to the assault together with Mr. Garnier (a French officer of rare merit); he received a mortal wound, and expired shortly afterwards."

At last, after long waiting, Clerc is to be relieved of the burden of his uselessness. The *Cassini* is to go to Shanghai in company with the *Capricieuse*, a sailing corvette, to which she will serve as a tow-boat. On board the *Capricieuse*, commanded by Mr. de Rocquemaurel, the commander of the station, is installed the French legation, composed of the minister, his wife, his secretary, and an interpreter. As to the *Cassini*, she carries the procurator of the Lazarists and ten Sisters of Charity, a pious colony to be landed at Ning-po. Thus the horizon is brightened and a quiet joy reigns on board; we notice the reflection of it in the following letter: "This voyage has, on account of the charm of the amiable virtues of our passengers, been the most agreeable we have made. That perfume of holiness which the religious communities so carefully preserve, and which the world knows nothing of, was offered to us, and nothing is so sweet and touching as that entire and simple devotedness of the Daughters of

Charity. That absence of all little feminine diplomacy, that desire to be employed for the sake of rendering service and not for the sake of appearing useful, that gayety so gentle and so uniform—these are the qualities which made their society a pleasure for each of us. As for their deep piety, their enlightened devotion, it does not belong to me to praise it; it is, however, the secret of all their other qualities, the source whence flow those limpid waters, and, more exactly, the tap-root which nourishes those fertile branches."

Clerc himself satisfies here "that desire of being employed for the sake of rendering service and not for the sake of appearing useful," which he admired in the Daughters of Charity. He does not tell us, and for a good reason, how their landing was effected. But the commander of the *Cassini*, who has not the same reason for keeping silence, gives us a detailed account: "Alexis Clerc rendered immense services to the commander of the *Cassini* throughout the cruise. I will only mention some of the most striking. In June, 1852, the *Cassini* received on board the Rev. Father Guillet, Lazarist and superior of the Sisters of Charity, as well as ten sisters destined for Ning-po. The vessel had no accommodations for so many lady passengers, but, thanks to the simplicity of the good sisters and to the very proper courtesy of the officers, everything passed off as well as possible, and the *Cassini* was able to discharge her precious freight at Ning-po. It was not easy to land European women in a large and thickly-populated

city.* A sort of uprising might even be feared when the authorities and the population should learn that these women were religious. It was therefore decided that they should be taken on shore at night in an unfrequented neighborhood, where sedan-chairs could immediately conceal them from the gaze of the curious. Alexis Clerc undertook the operation, and was seconded by Mr. Joyant de Couesnongle, his friend, the administrative officer. It was a perfect success. The rainy weather was even a favorable circumstance, and towards ten o'clock in the evening the sisters were installed in the house prepared for them."

After a rough passage the *Cassini* reaches Shanghai. Alexis announces this good news to his father: "We arrived on the 28th (of June) at Shanghai, the furthest north of the ports open to Europeans, and the one through which China will probably be the most encroached upon by Europe. The commercial importance of this place, already very great, is on an increase the ultimate limit of which it is impossible to foresee. The city of Shanghai is of the second class; it is situated on the Wam-pou, a branch of the Yang-tse-kiang. The surrounding country is perfectly flat, and the land is formed of the alluvia of the river. From the top of a pagoda nine stories in height and about six miles distant from Shanghai, some embankments that serve as a promenade for the English are to be seen. These vast plains are fur-

* The population of Ning-po, or rather Ning-po-fou (for it is a first-class city), numbers five hundred thousand souls.

rowed with an infinite number of canals. The canals are the railroads of China ; in Europe we have no idea of the profusion with which they are scattered about ; they are of great use as means of irrigation. The fields are well cultivated, and there is no waste land excepting what is occupied by the tombs."

This is all ; of the Jesuit mission not a word. Alexis has his reasons, doubtless, for not leading his father prematurely upon that dangerous ground ; for already he must have a presentiment that his sojourn in that mission, the happy and blessed term of so long a voyage, will not be without result for the great affair of his vocation.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CONVERSION ON BOARD THE "CASSINI."

During her long cruise in the China seas the *Cassini*, always having her central station at Macao, was destined to anchor three times in the harbor of Shanghai: in June, 1852, in March, 1853, and, finally, a last time in the month of September of the same year. It was on these several occasions that she had it in her power to offer effectual protection to the European establishments, and especially to the French mission, which was between the fire of the two armies. The interesting episode that will form the subject of the present chapter belongs to the second of these voyages to Shanghai.

Clerc, with his attractive qualities and his burning zeal, was everywhere a great converter; we know already that he proved himself such at Lorient and Brest, as well as at Indret. But on board the *Cassini*, in a select assembly of officers and cadets, the opportunity of doing good to souls was, so to speak, daily and continual; to seize it on the wing without making himself an annoyance, to await the moment of grace for months and even years (in doing which he was favored by the length of the expedition)—such was the line

of conduct he followed, not without success. I find a first evidence of this in the letter sent to me from the Chartreuse of Reposoir, from which I have already quoted. Attached to the expedition as a passed midshipman, young Mr. de G——, who had received a finished education, was not very far from the kingdom of God, and though he had for some time neglected the practice of his religion, even though his faith was darkened, he was fortunately neither an infidel nor a sceptic. But, like the paralytic of the Gospel, incapable of rousing himself from a fatal torpor, he awaited *a man*—a man who would reach out his hand to plunge him in the pool. Clerc was that providential man, and Mr. de G——, now a Carthusian, feels towards him an eternal gratitude.

"I must," he writes us, "relate here a circumstance which gratitude will never allow me to forget, and explain to you how Providence made use of Mr. Clerc to bring me back to the path of salvation. For about three years I had not approached the sacraments, notwithstanding the good examples I had before me. I had even eluded several attempts made by a missionary father to speak to me on the subject. Mr. Clerc, understanding how dangerous my position was at that age when men too often forsake the good to blindly follow evil, and knowing besides that my education had been most Christian, one day frankly accosted me and in a few words broached the subject. He had been walking the deck with me for a little while, when he said, with the smile

that enlivened his most serious conversations: 'Now, tell me how it happens that you no longer practise your religion? With the education you have received and the faith you certainly possess, I cannot really see what restrains you.' As I observed to him that I had doubts (a consequence, probably, of all that rubbish of bad reading which people of the world indulge in without scruple and without remorse), he asked quickly: 'Is it honestly that?' 'Yes,' I replied. 'If that is all,' he returned, 'why did you not tell me before? I will give you something to enlighten you.' And he did give me the 'Etudes Philosophiques' of Auguste Nicolas, which I read attentively. As soon as I came to the advice to pray, I prayed, and the veil fell. How much of that grace I certainly owe to the prayers of Mr. Clerc! May God give him his reward! Some days later I returned to the good path, which after fifteen years led me to the shelter of the cloister."

This is very simple, is it not? But it is a great thing in the order of salvation. All of us who have faith, and who imagine that we love our neighbor as ourselves, how many similar occasions do we not permit to escape us through want of watching for the moments of grace, but especially through want of appreciating the value of a soul!

All Clerc's conversions were not so easy, even among those midshipmen of whom the greater number, though not all, had been reared by Christian parents and masters. With such and such ones a first overture was a very hazardous thing,

and, the ice once broken, care had to be taken not to press the reluctant soul too closely or bring about a hand-to-hand struggle. Too frequently the zeal of the priest, of the missionary, failed completely. In his capacity of officer Clerc had a readier access to the midshipmen, and his regular duties offered him precious opportunities. And herein is one of the great secrets of the apostolate; nothing makes us understand it better than the example, at once so sweet and so powerful, of our Lord announcing the kingdom of God in the cities and towns of Judea. See him at the well of Jacob manifesting himself to the Samaritan woman, and kindling in the heart of a poor sinner the thirst for that living water that springeth up into life everlasting. As he journeyed from place to place, how many times did he not in the same way gather up and bring back to the fold the wandering sheep of the house of Israel!

It was, then, on the deck of the vessel where Clerc was on watch with another midshipman—this one a person who had gone far astray—that the serious conversation took place at the conclusion of which the young man admitted himself conquered and laid down his arms. Let us leave him to relate in all sincerity his own history, from the period of his fatal obduracy to the hour, for ever blessed, when the grace against which he was struggling triumphed over his long resistance.

THE MIDSHIPMAN'S STORY.

"I was not so fortunate as to be brought up to

respect the holy Catholic religion ; still, I gained at college the first notions of it, and it was with a fervor which was more lively and sincere than durable that at the age of twelve and a half I received Holy Communion for the first time. That first time was to be the last, at least for a long while.

"By the Easter which followed my first Communion I was already deeply infected with human respect, and if I approached the holy table once during that paschal season, it was at the invitation of the sisters of the infirmary where at the moment I happened to be confined, and doubtless the God of love no longer found in my heart anything but a pitiful little flame already too nearly burned out to be brightened by his presence.

"From that day the shadows grew thicker and thicker about my soul, and from at first blushing for a moment of simple, unaffected piety I soon came to take a miserable pride in proclaiming my impiety by my acts as well as by my words.

"I passed from the college to a preparatory school, then to the naval academy. Finally, at nineteen, I joined the sea as a midshipman. God, whose mercy and wisdom are unfathomable, had doubtless in some sort prepared my salvation before I had begun to throw myself away ; for, from the age of seven years, I had, without any apparent reason, declared my intention of being a sailor.

"At the naval academy I had dreamed about making my first voyage to the coasts of China, and it was at my request and to satisfy this desire that I, an open contemner of holy things, was appointed

to the *Cassini*, commanded by Mr. de Plas, and numbering among its officers Mr. Clerc, the lieutenant commander, and among its middies my companions of the naval school, de G——, now a Carthusian. I was still a furious wolf, and yet the Lord let me into his fold.

"Besides de G——, two or three of our mutual companions were, if not like him, firmly grounded in the faith, at least regular observers of the essential duties of religion. This was to me a reason for proclaiming my impiety louder and more boastingly still. Nothing but cynical jests, obscene speeches, horrible blasphemies issued constantly from my lips.

"Our vessel was carrying to the island of La Réunion Mgr. Desprez, the newly-appointed bishop of that island, with several priests and religious; we also had on board bound for China Mgr. Vérolles, Bishop of Mantchooria, as well as several priests of the Foreign Missions.

"The presence of these persons consecrated to God irritated my anti-religious humor.

"We were at sea on the feast of Easter. Alone of all the ship's company I abstained from being present at the Mass, which was celebrated with great solemnity, and I was very proud to see myself the only one among so many *wholly exempt from foolish prejudices and courageously independent.*

"There remained in my heart only a certain sympathy for the sisters, probably merely because they were women, and Almighty God was under

no obligation to allow me credit for a sentiment of which he was not the object. Nevertheless, it seems as though divine mercy gave itself that *pretext* for doing gentle violence to my rebellious soul.

"When we were in the China Sea we had on board for several days some Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul, who had left Macao to establish themselves at Ning-po. One day, having had occasion to land at the same time with them on one of the islands of the coast, I gathered some flowers to offer them. I have since been told that those good and holy women began from that hour to pray for me particularly.

"It was two years since our departure from France when we had some reason for spending a certain time in the waters of Canton. Commander de Plas, who had had a chapel fitted up on board and never allowed it to lack a chaplain, secured the services of the Abbé Girard, a priest belonging to the Foreign Missions, who has since died in Japan, and who was, at the time of which I write, living in a floating house on the river.

"Abbé Girard, whose heart was devoured with zeal for the salvation of souls, felt drawn towards me, and, as I have since learned, expressed to Mr. Clerc the sentiment with which I inspired him, and the desire he conceived of attempting my conversion. Poor Mr. Clerc, who for two years had had leisure to become acquainted with my dispositions, did not, it seems, conceal the fact that he saw no chance of success. Nevertheless, the Abbé Girard, whom Almighty God had chosen as his

first messenger of mercy to me, was not discouraged; one day he drew me into the cabin which the commander had placed at his disposal, and under pretext of discovering if a certain stenography which he knew I used was the same he had formerly taught, he asked me to translate aloud to him a short letter which he had written me. It was, as you may guess, a letter of wise advice and serious warning; it announced to me in the name of Divine Goodness that grace was at that moment visiting me and offering itself to me, but that, repulsed, it might never return. This announcement, which had been made me many times before and had not shaken my impiety, did not produce much more impression on me then; still, I remember that I experienced something like a moment of hesitation, something like a slight interior uneasiness, a passing trouble which I had already occasionally felt when my lips were casting up to God one of those terrible expressions of defiance, the mere memory of which causes me to tremble even now.

"I only noticed several years later a circumstance which seems to indicate how the merciful providence of God fixes beforehand the hours when it will make a supreme effort to become master of our hearts; the day on which this took place, and which the missionary had inscribed as the date at the top of his letter, was precisely the one on which I completed my twenty-first year.

"Our conversation was not prolonged; I wanted to escape from the *pernicious influence* which I

thought I had experienced for a moment, and shortly afterwards I read, with an indulgence in some horse-laughter, the good priest's charitable letter to my assembled comrades.

"We left the latitude of Canton, and thus were separated from him whom Almighty God had, as it were, made the confidant of his tender desires regarding me. Abbé Girard had, it seems, charged Mr. Clerc to continue the *reconstruction* of faith in my soul—a work the first stone of which, against all appearances, he did not despair of having laid.

"I sometimes found myself on watch with Mr. Clerc and under his orders, and one evening when we were at anchor, and there was no duty to claim either his or my attention, he managed to lead the conversation to religious questions, and soon to wrest from me an acknowledgment of the painful void which I had often felt in my soul ever since I had allowed the faith of my first Communion to become extinguished. In fact, it had happened to me at the naval school when I was listening to the astronomical lectures that were given us, to look with disdain upon my existence, so petty in comparison with the immensity of the universe, and to be seized with a profound distaste for life, no longer having a knowledge of my soul and its eternal destinies, and feeling condemned to painfully prepare a *future* which, if it were not cut short by death, would perhaps have no greater duration than the present employed in assuring it. Even at times the idea of suicide crossed my brain of eighteen years, the age of joyous unconcern.

"Later, on shipboard, in the calm of the beautiful tropical nights, in the midst of immensity, I tried to fathom the unfathomable depths of the starry heavens, and to divine beyond that vast but finite expanse of matter the Infinite whom my soul had lost. It was a sentiment I did not reason about; I did not know what I sought, but I felt that I lacked something, or rather that I lacked everything; I had a career of my choice and to my taste; I enjoyed, in spite of my impiety, the esteem of my superior officers and the good-will of my comrades; I had at home a family that awaited my return to lavish affection upon me more than ever before—yet, at those moments when, all being silent around my conscience, it could hear its almost extinct voice, I felt a void within me.

"From the day I made the acknowledgment of that instinctive want which I had sometimes felt, but had quickly tried to deceive instead of endeavoring to satisfy, my soul began to change, to *be converted*, to use the beautiful and appropriate expression which is applied to that moral phenomenon.

"Henceforth I had an end before me, and I started on my journey to reach it with a step that doubtless was very uncertain, tottering, and irresolute, but allowing myself to be urged forward by the energetic charity of our holy friend, who, as soon as he had seen the possibility of snatching me from the devil, had conceived an ardent, supernatural affection for me.

"I had to tell him that *I did not believe in God;* and in reality it was belief in God, the sentiment of his existence, that my soul had sometimes sought to draw from the abyss of the firmament. Following Mr. Clerc's advice, I commenced to say every night before going to sleep this singular prayer: 'My God, if thou dost exist, as is declared to me, deign, I beseech thee, to inspire me with the sentiment of thy existence.'

"Who can measure the extent of God's mercies? That prayer which resembled a blasphemy was my only co-operation in the work to which our venerated friend from that time forward consecrated his zeal, and the Lord waited for no more from me. That light which my soul had instinctively sought while denying it, began to penetrate the recesses of my heart. The thick darkness which for a number of years had obscured my vision, began to fade away before the aurora of grace; I felt that I was seized and carried along by a divine current to which I had only to abandon myself, and which transported me through new regions. The night wherein I had so long lived fled away, and the day steadily brightened before me. I approached objects which, seen from afar off and through the shadows of impiety, had excited my aversion, and they grew beautiful to my eyes. My affectionate pilot said to me: 'Soon you will see new horizons opening before you'; and in reality I experienced in the supernatural order what I had felt in the inferior order when, for the first time, I sailed towards the open sea,

towards the blue and limpid waters of the immense and sparkling ocean. Henceforth my soul is captivated ; it no longer dreams of resisting; it lets itself be gently borne by the ineffable grace of that God who, forgetting in an instant all the outrages he has received from his creature, seems to be grateful because it is willing to yield to him its love.

"Nothing of the work that was being carried on in the depths of my soul appeared exteriorly ; my comrades thought me still the hardened rebel they had heard turning the tender and serious warnings of the pious missionary into ridicule.

"One evening I happened to be on deck when prayers were begun according to the maritime regulation ; for two years I had never once been present at this exercise, and, if at the moment I found myself among the ship's company, I always hastened to withdraw, so as not to be obliged to uncover. This evening I felt urged to make a first act of faith, and before human respect, so long my master, had had time to remind me of its ancient rights, my cap was off my head. My comrades (those who imitated my irreligion) had gone, supposing that I was following them. When I rejoined them after prayers were over, a profound astonishment was still depicted on their countenances, but they had the delicacy not to allude to what had passed. As for me, I was not quite at my ease, but the step was taken ; I was like a man who did not have courage enough to jump in the water himself, but whom another has pushed in; I was in, and it cost me no more to stay.

"From that day faith made rapid progress within my soul; the gratuitous mercy of God and the burning zeal of the future martyr alone acted. I repeat it again, I was as though gently borne along by a current that required no efforts on my part.

"I had preserved almost no notion of the religion that had illumined my childhood for so short a time. For example, I no longer knew the meaning of the Trinity; I thought the Blessed Virgin belonged to it; my ignorance was that of a pagan. One day, however, I felt impelled to make the sign of the cross. The Lord seemed to ask me for these feeble marks of my good-will, and to await them in order to lavish his graces upon me with new profusion.

"Soon after this Mr. Clerc offered me a medal of the Blessed Virgin; I accepted it, and suspended it round my neck. Human respect, conquered a first time by surprise, now found itself in my heart in presence of what was for it a formidable enemy: this was a disposition I have always had to push without discretion the application of my ideas or of my fancies to the extremest point. This disposition, which has caused me to commit many faults, was in this case, through divine mercy, a powerful help to my soul.

"Two or three months before I had made the cabin which my comrades and I occupied resound with my shameless blasphemies—and now they saw me, at the hour of the morning ablutions, uncover my breast where the precious medal shone.

"Almighty God had armed, one against the

other, two caprices of my nature, and rendered vigorous the one which was, for the time being, to assure my salvation.

"I often think, and not without being moved, of how my comrades treated me then. Some of them, on account of their religious faith, had been the objects of my sarcasm, which they never reproached me for; others, on the contrary, had heard me far surpass the impiety of their language, and even when, too soon forgetful of my own past, I became severe towards their incredulity, they never taunted me with my previous irreligion. In the sequel, one of the latter frequently offered to replace me when my duties would have prevented me from attending Mass on Sundays.

"I was thus sailing on a calm and tranquil sea when one day a terrible tempest arose in my soul. I was again on watch with Mr. Clerc. Eight o'clock had struck, night had set in, and we were to remain on deck until midnight. The ship was resting on her anchors: the sailors were stretched on the planks asleep; it seemed as though there were only three of us between the heavens and the waters—Almighty God, his faithful interpreter, and myself. This evening Mr. Clerc began to talk to me about confession. I trembled at the word, and suddenly that luminous ocean, in whose midst my soul had been delighting for some months, seemed to grow dark. I saw my old prejudices, which I had believed to be vanished because I had ceased to feel them, coming back to me from all sides. I was, as it were, surrounded with a circle

of black phantoms that sought to stifle my new faith, and my old aversions seemed to live again in my heart and drown the supplicating voice of my earnest friend. Three hours passed, he speaking without pause, drawing from the depths of his piety and tenderness ever-fresh arguments to triumph over the repugnances which my silent manner allowed him to easily conjecture. He told me afterwards that he then felt that the solemn hour had sounded for me, and that, being without trouble of my own arrived at the gates of the celestial city, I would, if I did not enter them by an energetic effort, see them close before me for ever. In reality God owed me nothing. I had done nothing for him ; on the contrary, I owed him an account of the graces he had lavished upon me, and which had brought me thus far. My sensations were those of a man standing at the mouth of a mysterious dark cavern, of unknown depth, which he believes to be infested with hideous reptiles, and which some one is trying to persuade him to enter alone, without light and without assistance. In an instant the devil, undoubtedly feeling his prey about to escape him, had been clever enough to restore life to all those silly imaginations I had derived from execrable romances. Prostrate beneath the burden of a sort of invincible terror, my panting soul from time to time made an effort to rise ; then it fell back upon itself, deprived of both strength and courage. I know not how to express the agony I suffered during those three hours. I was mute, and my poor friend, worn out, felt his

heart painfully wrung by the thought that it was finished with me. . Suddenly, moved by one of those supreme graces which doubtless cost our Saviour the most bitter pangs and the most profound ignominies, I straightened myself up and said to Mr. Clerc: 'I will confess to-morrow.' I know not which preponderated in his heart, surprise or joy. I had not succeeded in driving off the phantoms that beset me, but I had repeated interiorly, and, as it were, stammeringly, the words the Spirit of God dictated to my soul: 'My God, I cannot deliver myself from these aversions, but in gratitude for what thou hast done for me I will make this effort that is asked of me.' I have often in thought recalled that solemn moment of my life, and it has never been without deep emotion.

"The next day I entered with Father Languillat,* whom I had selected at the suggestion of Mr. Clerc, the chapel on board, and opened my soul that had been shut up for nine years. Ah! God be thanked a thousand times for loving miserable sinners so much!

"Father Languillat made me promise to read that part of Mr. Nicolas' 'Etudes' which treats of the Eucharist; and, in fact, I opened the book, but soon closed it again. God's grace outran the text, and it seemed to me that those pages, learned as they were, could teach me nothing more. My heart, readier than my mind, had in a few moments plentifully drunk of the waters of divine

*Now Bishop of Sergiopolis and Administrator of the Diocese of Nankin.

knowledge. I asked to approach Holy Communion, and I definitely re-entered the Christian life.

"Twenty years have passed since that day, and, in an incessant warfare between God's grace and my miserable nature, the latter has, to my shame, too often been victorious; but the God of infinite patience and generosity has never permitted that the faith restored to my soul should be shaken. I returned to the Christian life almost without study. For a long time afterwards I had not the leisure to study attentively that admirable science, of which I had learned scarcely the first elements in my childhood, and which in my youth became perfectly strange to me. Notwithstanding this, the revolts of my nature never had the power to produce the slightest trouble in my renewed faith. For twenty years I have been ruled by faith—enveloped, penetrated with faith—and I cannot help being frightened at the terrible responsibility I have incurred by not having made fruitful within me so lively a faith, the pure gift of God.

"During the fifteen months that followed this most important event of my life—that is, until the *Cassini* returned to France—Mr. Clerc and I lived the intimate life of shipboard. Daily he edified me by his piety, his humility, his so courteous charity for all. How many times we prayed together, now in the modest chapel on deck or in his cabin, now leaning over the ship's rail, letting the invocations of the Rosary fall bead by bead upon the murmuring waves the vessel scattered as she pursued her course, each one of which, as it

disappeared in the darkness, seemed to mingle its melodious ripple with the sound of our voices! How many times we together received the hospitality of your pious and valiant brethren at Zikawei,* at Tsamkaleu, at Shanghai! O sweet and imperishable memories, which I cannot recall to him save by looking towards heaven!"

Our readers will not be displeased with us for having reproduced in its eloquent simplicity the recital of this fervent convert, who from that day of grace was Clerc's friend in life and death; who twenty years later witnessed his solemn profession, made on the morning of the 19th of March, 1871, just in the sinister dawn of the Commune; and who a few days afterwards again received a precious token of this holy friendship—a letter, the last, written behind the bolts of Mazas.

* College of the Jesuit Fathers, near Shanghai.

CHAPTER IX.

SHANGHAI AND THE JESUIT MISSION.

When Clerc arrived at Shanghai for the second time, in the course of the month of March, 1853, the first thing that struck him was the continued progress of the insurrection, whose wave already covered a considerable portion of the province of Nankin and washed towards the coasts a veritable army of thieves, the refuse of all the neighboring provinces, that closely threatened the mission of the Jesuit Fathers and the establishments of European commerce situated on the banks of the Wampou outside the fortified enclosure of the Chinese city. "We are," he wrote, "on the eve of most important events. The famous rebels who, since 1832, have been steadily gaining ground in the Celestial Empire, in these latter days, after occupying the provinces of Honan and Houpe, have taken possession of a very large city, the capital of the province, called Hantcheou, I think.* On our arrival at Ning-po it was said that they were besieging Nankin; here, at Shanghai, that Nankin was taken; then, that neither of the reports was true, and that the rebels were advancing towards the north. There is very little positive

* Perhaps Hingtcheou, a fortified town in Honan.

information, and the highest Chinese authorities know no more about the matter than we do. What is certain, and what I know for myself, is that the *tao-tai*, or governors, of Ning-po and Shanghai are in great uneasiness; these immense cities are absolutely drained of soldiers. In Ning-po a band of fifty go through their drill every day; in Shanghai there are twenty soldiers; these are cities of perhaps 500,000 inhabitants. The winter is cold, commerce is almost destroyed, consequently the misery is very great and far beyond what we know anything about in France; yet these legions of miserable creatures remain quiet, and up to the present only their mandarins live in fear of harm. Such a thing would be impossible in Europe, where some scoundrel would soon have the enterprise to obtain supplies for himself by an easy pillage.

"The situation of the authorities is so critical that the *tao-tai* of Shanghai, who last year was so badly disposed towards us, and whose malevolence only stopped short of obliging us to go to Nankin, has accepted as a precious favor the offer we have made him of a refuge for himself, his family, and his possessions, in case of the arrival of the rebels, or of what is more to be feared, a band of robbers.

"The weakness of this vast empire is as prodigious as its duration, and I believe that the instinct of the ant has been somewhat divided between itself and the Chinese. But we cannot the less be astonished at the stupidity of this government, so sluggish in its own defence. Being so well aware of its own incapacity, why has it not

attempted to secure some mercenary troops from Europe? The three hundred mobiles who are on their way to establish themselves in America would have sufficed to fix the victory on the emperor's side, and to discipline and animate these poor soldiers. It was in reward for a similar service that the Portuguese were allowed to found Macao.

"The reigning emperor is named Hien-foung. The leader of the rebels, who now assumes the same title, is Tien-te; he was formerly, it is stated, a scullion in a monastery of bonzes. What is sure is that he is a Chinaman, and, although the Tartars may be *Chinesed*, the revolt against a foreign dynasty is popular enough throughout the empire. The rebels, it is said, do not pillage the country; there is no more to be feared from them than from the legitimate mandarins, and were it not that after having occupied the cities they leave them disorganized and without government, so that their own army is followed by an army of thieves, the people would have nothing to complain of on their account. The mandarin of Shanghai would like to obtain from our simplicity that the *Cassini* should go to Nankin to give a great moral support to the cause of the emperor. He has not the powers any more than our commander to arrange so weighty an affair as a defensive alliance with so compromised an emperor; therefore he will probably have his labor for his amiable pains.

"The English and American fleets and the *Cassini* keep near Shanghai, the north of China being at present the theatre of events which are probably

Jesuits and of the highest importance to English commerce. There are very influential English houses that during the last months have not been able to pay their employés, money is so scarce. I will tell all the next week to give you other particulars of these matters. This mail leaves to-morrow, the 26th, and I have only this evening to finish my letters."

Before closing his letter Lloyd adds the following few lines: "To-morrow the definition of the Catholic church of Shanghai takes place. It will be a great event."

And truly, since the ruin of the ancient missions was completed at the close of the last century, never had the Catholic Church displayed so great pomp, nor asserted so loudly her right to an equal appeal in the open daylight on that soil which is always wet with the blood of martyrs. It will belonged to Shanghai to uplift the cross again and to restore to honor the altar of the living God, for that city is the native place of the illustrious disciple of Father Ricci, Paul Siu, a man who, clothed with the best dignities of the empire, used his immense influence and his considerable riches only to protect the missionaries and to labor himself to establish in his family and in his country the reign of Jesus Christ. It was that generous neophyte who received the fathers in his own residence, which thus became the first church of Shanghai; but Father Gabriel having led him to observe that the time and the poor would not readily forgive the union of so high and powerful a personage, he

above all the buildings of the city, was seen at a great distance, and showed to the eyes of the infidels themselves the centre of the whole mission and the residence of the bishop. On the front the Pope's arms were distinguishable among the other ornaments, and the delighted neophytes stopped to read beautiful inscriptions in Chinese characters, which recalled a glorious past by reproducing textually those which the ancient missionaries had engraven on the great door of the church of Pekin.

"Alexis Clerc," the commander of the *Cassini*, who betrays his own sentiments while interpreting those of that other himself, tells us—"Alexis Clerc had the joy of seeing this church filled with the Chinese faithful, who had gathered in such great numbers that it was impossible for them to kneel during Mass. It was a touching sight—that multitude of Christian boats grouped on the Wampou near the church, and bearing either a floating streamer or a white flag on which was a blue cross. There were in these boats whole families, some of whom had come more than fifty leagues. Two boats from the *Cassini*, fully armed, were stationed in the river, to prevent, if there should be occasion, the tumult and disorder with which the Protestants and some Chinamen had threatened the fathers. Some non-commissioned officers, well-armed, were added to the commander's staff present at the ceremony. The worthy Mr. de Montigny, consul of France, who seemed to expect some disturbance, brought with him a confidential servant carrying pistols under his garments, and he would not have

failed to use them in case of need. But, thank God! there was only the disorder of enthusiasm and joy. Palm Sunday, for that was the day, nobly inaugurated the cathedral of Shanghai."

All the time not taken up by the duties of his position Clerc spent with the fathers, who liked him and already treated him as one of themselves. Two steps from the city was the seminary of Tsamkaleu, and a few miles distant the college of Zikawei—two successful attempts at the education of the natives which had most agreeable surprises in store for him. When he visited those children, those youth of a charming candor and docility, of a fervor that reminded their masters of the best days of St. Acheul, Fribourg, and Brugelette, the greater number of an intelligence very ready and accessible to all that constitutes what we consider a liberal education—when, I say, he saw them by turns at study, in the chapel, at their recreations, he shook off the prejudices he could not help receiving from the grotesque types whose rarest examples he had met in Macao, and conceded without difficulty that all the natives of the Celestial Empire were not fatally and invincibly the *Chinese of the folding screens.* Those young students, rescued from infidelity, and destined, some to give an example of the domestic virtues in the midst of the corruption of paganism, others to become priests of Jesus Christ, apostles, martyrs perhaps, appeared to him worthy of a tender interest, and he loved them as he was capable of loving, with all his heart, and so as—I

have a proof of it before me—to inspire them with a grateful and almost filial affection. For they certainly were, if I am not mistaken, pupils of Zikawei or of Tsamkaleu who together signed *Francis Vuon* and *Mathias Sen* at the end of a Latin letter written on red paper and accompanying some Chinese verses—a letter which Clerc received after his return to France, and which he deposited in his private archives, where I found it. I read there, among other things (in the Latin, be it well understood), that from his first appearance in Shanghai Alexis has not ceased to load his young correspondents with benefits whose multitude and magnitude are such that they cannot attempt to express it. But they remember him in their prayers, they ask God to grant him all kinds of happiness: "a glory as high and lasting as the mountains, a grace renewed every day like the sun and moon"; and they implore him, for his part, not to forget the unfortunate Chinese dragged in such great numbers along the paths of error and so hard to bring back to God. Making as large an allowance as we choose for rhetoric and oriental metaphor, those gallant young men have grateful memories, and Clerc has known how to speak to them in a language that is understood in all countries.

One of the old laborers of the Nankin mission, whose shattered health has brought him nearer to us and fixed him in France, tells us that he has preserved a delightful recollection of Lieutenant Clerc's stay at Shanghai and Zikawei. "In read-

ing," he continues, "the narration of the captivity and death of our fathers (during the Commune), I said to myself, thinking especially of Father Clerc: 'Behold the worthy crowning of a life which I so often admired in China twenty years ago, and which now appears to me like a noble prelude to the glory of martyrdom.' When the *Cassini* was anchored off Shanghai the future martyr generally came to take part in our religious festivals. He was singularly fond of finding himself domesticated with our fathers, and of following the regulation of the day with a punctuality and ease which, except for his officer's uniform, would have caused him to be taken for a fervent religious. In all my acquaintance with the young officer I admired from the beginning the unequivocal marks of a most solid virtue and a most amiable piety, the both without variation or intermission. Always the same, always smiling from the effect of a genuine and frank gayety, the young sailor showed already by his words and actions that virtue and piety were perfectly acclimated in his heart, and they shed over his whole life so gentle a radiance that one could not know him without experiencing a profound sentiment of love and veneration for his person."

The college of Zikawei had then for superior Father Adrien Languillat, now Bishop of Sergiopolis and Administrator of the diocese of Nankin, a valiant missionary, who had passed through the prisons of Changton and looked death in the face more than once. Clerc was on intimate terms

with him and became his spiritual son. If we had not known this from good authority, we would have guessed it merely from seeing them together when, in 1869, Mgr. Languillat, on his way to the Vatican Council, spent some weeks in Paris, and came to the School Sainte Geneviève, where he found the lieutenant of the *Cassini* under a Jesuit's habit. From morning to night Clerc hung upon the lips of the missionary bishop, who was himself visibly moved by this unexpected meeting after so long a separation, and the cordiality of their intercourse made us all exclaim: "See how they love one another!"

Alexis also formed a close friendship with the superior-general of the mission, who was then Father Joseph Broullion, an energetic and impassioned nature, but with a passion that is well fitting the heart of an apostle having no other object than the good of souls. Consumed in a short space by the ardor of his zeal, this active and courageous superior left precious memories in the mission which he governed only three years. In the course of that year, 1853, and while the *Cassini* was stationed by turns at Shanghai and Macao, Father Broullion, crossing the seas with Mr. de Montigny, Consul-General of France, came to expose in person to our superiors of Rome and Paris the needs of the Nankin Church, and to ask them for reinforcements.*

* This voyage explains how it happens that a certain letter of Lieutenant Clerc's, which we shall give presently, is dated from Shanghai, and addressed in Europe to the superior of the mission of Kiang-nan.

Before starting he made a rapid sketch of the mission whose interests were confided to him, added a great number of letters from his fellow-missionaries on the events that disturbed the Celestial Empire, and an earnest introduction which perfectly revealed his soul of an apostle, and the whole appeared in a volume (1855) under this title: "Memoir of the Present State of the Mission of Kiang-nan (1842–1855)." A few details borrowed from this publication will furnish an exact idea of the spectacle Clerc had before his eyes, and at which he gazed not as an indifferent nor merely curious beholder.

Let us, then, picture to ourselves a province almost as large as France, crossed from west to east by a mighty river—the Yang-tse-kiang, which ships of the line have ascended as far as forty leagues from its mouth—and watered in every direction by innumerable canals. These canals, which are the chief means of communication, serve also to irrigate the rice plantations, and are all utilized as fisheries, a great proportion of the inhabitants living only on rice and fish. Such is Kiang-nan, the capital of which is Nankin, and which is divided into two sub-provinces, Nganhoei in the west and Kiang-sou in the east—that is, towards the coast; this latter country, entirely level, is very frequently devastated by inundations. The total population of Kiang-nan is estimated at fifty millions of souls, and all these constitute only one diocese, that of Nankin, of which the last titular was a Jesuit, Mgr. Leimbeck-Hoven, who died

in 1787 after the suppression of his order. Such is the inheritance the Jesuits came into possession of only in 1842—an immense field left almost without cultivation, and which they had to clear up afresh. Of the fifty millions, as yet (1853) only seventy-two thousand are Christians; but this little flock is scattered over an extent of territory out of all proportion to its number. Such a Christian settlement, Ou-ho, for instance, is more than five hundred kilometers from Shanghai; hence the constantly-renewed fatigue of the evangelical laborers, whose zeal, moreover, would not permit them to rest, since they deem themselves, in the words of the apostle, *the debtors of all men,* both pagans and Christians. And then in that country such a thing as a *non-practical* Christian is unknown. All make their Easter duty, or, more exactly, follow the exercises of the mission when one is given in their district, and of course the missionary has to work night and day. "All the business of a Christian community," Father Broullion says, "is transacted at the time of the mission. To hold the court of a justice of the peace, to set to rights families and households, to reconcile enemies, to urge restitutions, to correct libertines and opium-smokers, to promote good works, to reestablish, to develop associations of zeal and charity, to visit pagans, to solace the unfortunate, etc.—such is the inevitable circle in which the activity of the missionary is displayed, not to count the unforeseen calls upon his strength and prudence, such as the dying to visit at a distance, and the

assaults of the idolaters to sustain—assaults which come too often, alas! to overthrow Christians and churches, missions and missionaries. With his thirty yearly confessions per day the priest cannot attend to all the details of the Christian settlement, and happy is the one who has been able to associate with himself an intelligent catechist, and to create in the heart of the parishes, by means of administrators and virgins, a centre of pious industries; with the aid of such instruments his influence will penetrate more deeply, and the fruits of the mission will be preserved after his departure. For the stay of the missionary, very short in small places, is long nowhere; and, besides, a great many of the Christians are too busy to remain within his reach more than two or three days. These are, among others, the fishermen, obliged by poverty to depart as soon as they have finished their confession, received Holy Communion, and heard the instructions of one or two mornings. How can the priest detain men who without constant labor would not have their daily rice to eat?" *

In 1853 the missionaries of Kiang-nan distributed to the faithful more than eighty-three thousand communions, representing more than ninety-one thousand confessions; they baptized five thousand four hundred and forty-five children of pagans, of whom one hundred and ninety-seven were raised in the orphanages of the mission, more than six hundred others having been adopted by Christian fam-

* "Memoir of the Present State of the Mission of Kiang-nan," p. 52.

ilies. As to the adults converted and baptized, they numbered over five hundred—a hard work that sets loose all the devils of hell ; it is Satan's prey that is snatched from him, and if it escapes him he is sure to take his revenge. But the apostle of Jesus Christ hurries to meet persecution and death ; if he succumbs he knows that his last hour is the hour of victory, and that the reward promised him will have no end.

Father Broullion concludes his "Memoir" as follows :

"We can promise those who will come to share our labors plenty of fatigue, weariness, contradictions, and, if not the palm of martyrdom, numerous occasions of wearing out soul and body for the glory of God. But they will also have the assurance of hastening by their devotedness the final conquest of this vast empire, which has so long rebelled against the preaching of the Gospel."

This language suited Clerc perfectly, and it seemed to him that the call of the superior of the mission was addressed to him personally, so great was his attraction for all heroic sacrifices. Besides, he saw the missionaries at the work, living as he did in their midst, treated like one of them, ready, if they would consent, to share their apostolic fatigues, and nothing equalled the eloquence of the facts of which he was the daily witness.

In the journal of the first long retreat he made in France after his admission into the Society he has recorded a name, that of Massa, which signified to him evangelical poverty carried to the de-

privation of everything and to the sacrifice of life. It is a souvenir brought back from Shanghai. And, in fact, our catalogues fix the date of Father René Massa's death as the 28th of April, 1853.

What an admirable example is that of the Massas! I say the Massas, because the Father René to whom Clerc's souvenir refers is not the only one of the name, and in such a matter it would be easy to confound them. They were five brothers belonging to a patrician family of Naples, all five religious of the Society of Jesus, and all five missionaries in Kiang-nan. The Fathers Agostino, Gaetano, Nicolo, and Renato, or René, Massa arrived at the mission together in the year 1846, and were joined the following year by their younger brother, Aloysius, then in his twentieth year, and who was ordained a priest only in 1854. This is not all; it needs another touch to finish the picture of this family so worthy of the most glorious centuries of the Church, thus completing its resemblance to the forever illustrious families that produced a St. Gregory of Nazianzen and a St. Basil of Cæsarea. When they saw all their sons departed for China, Baron Massa and his noble wife also determined to consecrate their last years to God; and perhaps at the moment I am writing this, in the retreat of their choice, and long since ripe for heaven, they are about to receive the crown of the patriarchs which they have won by their great faith.

When Clerc arrived in Shanghai the Massas were already only four, Father Gaetano having been the

first of the brothers to be taken from the mission. The inundations that devastated Kiang-nan in 1850 were succeeded by terrible misery. While the famine lasted the residence of the bishop at Tom-ka-tou and the college of Zikawei daily received thousands of poor creatures, to whom rations of rice were distributed. Father Gaetano, who had been a priest for four months, was devoting himself with his whole heart to that good work when he learned that he was wanted at the children's hospital; he was wet with perspiration, fasting, and for six hours had been tormented by fever; no matter—he flew to his dear sick children, cured or baptized several of them; but he took the epidemic and died of it in eight days.

In 1853 it is his brother René's turn. Pestilence had followed the inundation and famine, and its victims strewed the roads of Ngan-hoei. Father René, the missionary of Ou-ho, built some sheds to receive the vagrants, and labored with indefatigable energy for the conversion of the pagans, enlightened by so many terrible lessons and enticed by the bait of Christian charity into the evangelical nets. Here is what Father Broullion tells us of his last labors and his holy death, which made so deep an impression upon Clerc:

"A witness of the fearful suffering caused by the scarcity of food, he forgot his own needs, and, that he might assist a greater number of the unfortunates, denied himself all but what was absolutely necessary. No more fruit, no more meat, no strengthening beverage graced his repasts; once a

day he ate a little rice and dried herbs, an insufficient and unwholesome diet, but which he reproached himself for if he learned that some poor wretch in the neighborhood was dying of hunger; he would then make haste to send him the dishes off his table, happy to fast to save a fellow-creature's life.

"During a six months' sojourn in Ou-ho he preached to the pagans several times a day. A large number of catechumens were granted to his zeal; he baptized as many as thirty-two at once, and forty others were awaiting the same grace when he fell sick. Seventy-two children collected by his efforts were confided to Christian families, who engaged to maintain them. In the meantime we vainly endeavored to send him aid; he was at a distance, and the insurgent army of Kuam-si closed the route. Therefore he continued to impose upon himself new privations in order to carry on his work. Labor and fasting exhausted his strength. Forced to keep his bed, he no longer got up except to celebrate Mass. Nevertheless, being sent for by some sick persons who were dying of typhoid fever, he hurried to their assistance. This was his last effort.

"The next morning he wanted to rise again to offer the Holy Sacrifice. 'There is no priest,' he said, 'whom I can call upon to give me the Holy Viaticum. I must myself consecrate, so as to die in the arms of our Lord.' But his members refused to obey him. Yielding to the entreaties of his catechist, he consented that a Christian physi-

cian should be called ; but this last, delayed by the rains and the inundation, only arrived just after the father had taken a remedy prepared by a pagan. Either from the effect of this medicine or because the disease had already reached its final stage, the same day Father René fell into a state that preludes the agony, and recovered the use of his tongue only in his last hour.

"On the vigil of St. Mark's his countenance lighted up with intense happiness, and, fixing a joyous gaze on his catechist, as if to communicate to him his thoughts, he seemed to charge him with his farewells to his brothers and his friends in the Society of Jesus. The following day, April 25, 1853, he gave up his soul to the God whose glory he had procured at the cost of his life. His sufferings, his death, his prayers inaugurated the progress of the Gospel in Ngan-hoei, even as the devotedness of Brother Sinoquet and of the Fathers Estève, Gaetano (Massa), and Pacelli was a seed of salvation for Kiang-sou."

But while Clerc contemplates with an envious eye the heroic devotedness of the missionaries struggling with pestilence and famine, behold a new scourge is let loose upon the mission—the scourge of war—a war feebly conducted, and wherein the combatants give proof of little discipline and military bravery, but for that reason all the more fatal to the inoffensive populations whom it overruns and crushes without pity. From Shanghai, where the approach of the rebels is

dreaded, and not less, perhaps, that of the imperialists, Clerc writes, June 1:

"My dear Father: The vessel which took my last letters had the misfortune to be lost with the mail. My package was a good big one. I am going to try to repeat its contents very briefly.

"The great affair is the war of the rebellion. I think I have already told you how a band of men belonging to the province of Kiang-si passed victoriously through Kiang-si, Canton, Honan, and Hou-pe, which are equal to four countries of the size of France.* Now they are in this province of Kiang-nan, masters of Nankin and Tchen-kiang-fou. So far they have received no check; but they have established no authority in the countries they have traversed, and consequently have left them thoroughly disorganized, driving all the magistrates away and building up nothing, to the triple detriment of the emperor, of themselves, and especially of the inhabitants. But, looking at the immense extent of territory that now separates them from their point of departure, it is plain that theirs is the inevitable alternative of conquering or all perishing. The number of these rebels is very small in comparison with the enterprise, and well-informed persons do not suppose them to be over

* Clerc deceives himself, we think. The rebels started from Kouang-si, or Western Kouang, adjoining Kouang-tong (Canton), or Eastern Kouang. Therefore our missionaries generally call them *Kuam-si-jen*, or men of Kouang-si (*Kuam si*, Portuguese orthography); or, quite simply, *Kuamsinuans*. Kiang-si, situated between Kouang-si and Kiang-nan, was the most direct route the insurrection could have taken to reach Nankin.

five thousand. How can a handful of men so imperil a great empire? It is not because they are better armed, more able, or braver, perhaps, than the emperor's soldiers; but all the way from their own province, where probably they were more numerous, they have had no veritable resistance to overcome, and their adversaries have been more nimble in flying than in advancing.

"Assuredly, if the mobiles had been transported * to China instead of California, they might have conquered the empire. It is astonishing that there does not spring up some adventurer to thus try his fortune.

"What is certain is that this empire is rotten to the core in its rulers, whose corruption and greed are the scourge of the people, rendering them an easy prey for the first who will undertake to subjugate them. It is said that the emperor is assembling all he has left of Tartars in the north to march to exterminate the rebels. There is little necessity for such great efforts; but the positive fact is that the insurgents are left in quiet possession of what they occupy. They on their side have made forced levies, and, setting one of their own party over every twenty-five men, try to make soldiers of them.

"The rebels seem to me to have small chance of success; but, on the other hand, in Kiang-si (probably Kouang-si) a new uprising is talked of, and they say that the province of Canton begins to be

* The mobiles had been mutinous.—TRANS.

extremely alarmed. Besides, the city of Amoy has just been taken from the mandarins by some Chinese belonging to a secret society, the avengers of a member of the society who was unjustly put to death three years ago by the governor of that city. Finally, the pirates, more numerous than ever, blockade Fou-tcheou-fou, the capital of Fokien. Is the end of the empire at hand ? I do not think so. The history of China presents many such critical epochs. How unjust would the complaints of European nations appear to the Chinese ! To-day commerce is almost suspended throughout China ; you are well aware in France that the Chinese are an entirely commercial people ; the ruin of several important European houses is also nearly certain. The misery, already so great, goes on increasing beyond all proportion, and driving the people, perhaps, to every excess. This populous empire is therefore threatened with the greatest misfortunes. As to the rebels properly so called, the uncertainty about them has appeared up to the present time to dictate the policy of the European powers in their regard. The governor-general of the double province of Kiang-sou and Ngan-hoei, or Kiang-nan, has, in the name of the emperor, asked all the foreign ministers for assistance against the rebels, but nothing has resulted from his request. The English plenipotentiary, Sir G. Bonham, has been to Nankin, has communicated with the Kuamsmians, and has brought back their proclamations and some books containing their doctrines. He treated with the chiefs under the

honorary titles they assume—it is so much in harmony with English politics to encourage all revolutions; then, after that exploit, he left for Hong-Kong with the vessels he brought with him.

"The American minister attempted to go to Nankin, but the vessel he was on board of drew too much water; since, all the American vessels have left for the Lieou-kieou Islands, the last rendezvous before reaching Japan, whither they are bound to open the negotiation so long talked of."

After a melancholy reference to his own inaction, Clerc adds these few particulars of the character of the insurrection:

"The rebels affect to be fulfilling a divine mission, and pretend that they blindly obey the orders of God. Their books are a mixture of Protestant and Mohammedan notions; they seem to be fatalists, prove their mission by their success, and declare themselves perfectly resigned to yield the day they shall have accomplished their destiny. Perhaps Freemasonry has also something to do with their plans. The secret societies play a certain part in these countries, especially among the expatriated Chinese, who are very numerous in English and Dutch Malacca.

"The Christians of Nankin have had to suffer from these rebels; some have been called upon to join the army, others to perform some religious act contrary to the faith. Many have perished. Still, it is not yet a regular persecution. The pagans have also perished in very great numbers. Up to the present the Christians have been badly treated

but we do not know that any have been put to death solely on account of their religion. Nevertheless, the insurgents have done enough to prevent us from wishing them any success."

A letter from Mgr. Maresca gives more details of this beginning of persecution, and concludes in these terms: "Of the six hundred Christians we counted in the cities of Nankin, Yang-tcheou, and Tchen-Kiang, fifty have been massacred or burned, and several have been bound and beaten. The greater number have lost everything, and are now captives, exposed to all kinds of dangers to soul and body."

There was not the least doubt but that a sufficient motive for armed intervention could be found in such facts.

Therefore Clerc restrains himself no longer; since he cannot act he must speak, and his words will be heard in Paris even in the office of a minister.

In the first days of July, on board the *Cassini*, which was then at anchor near Castel Peak, a little distance from Shanghai, he takes his pen and begins to write at the most rapid rate a "Note on our Position in China, in Cochin China, and in Corea, and on the Part we might Play in those Countries." The opening paragraphs breathe the loftiest sentiments. I quote:

"France, obedient to the duty of a state not to suffer great events which do not actually touch its interests to transpire in the world without manifesting its presence, and without reserving its

rights when it does not actually assert them—France, ever since the opium war, maintains in Chinese waters naval vessels which the protection of her commerce does not seem to require. Yet, should the line of conduct marked out for our diplomatic agents and our military commanders be dictated only by that somewhat vague and indefinite idea? Let us also obey that mysterious instinct which for thirty years has been directing the attention of civilized nations to China; let us also be prepared to play in that country a *rôle* in harmony with our national character and capabilities. If the growing influence of England and the United States is due to their commerce, why should not ours, in the want of that basis, be founded upon our arms enforcing justice? France does not derive the least of the splendor of her military glory from the wars she has waged without securing material gain, and she scorns a policy that would draw the sword only to dictate commercial treaties.

"The empires of these vast regions are often the theatre of unforeseen catastrophes; palace revolutions are frequent. Everybody knows how the Bishop of Adran conquered to our country a powerful and deserved influence in Cochin China; circumstances more or less similar may frequently present themselves, and it is important that our representatives should be able to profit by them. At all events the desire for a large share of influence is not in this case the inspiration only of national pride, and although such an ambition be irrepre-

hensible in itself, it is justified by a nobler motive. From Tartary almost to the peninsula of Malacca numerous missionaries of our faith, and nearly all Frenchmen, are evangelizing these immense and unfortunate regions. France is the natural protector of all; the European nations recognize the honor and charge as hers, and by a tradition which is indestructible—since times so disastrous to us have not destroyed it—these people turn their eyes to her whe in their sufferings they lose all other hope."

Clerc is of the opinion that by prudent management a protection may be extended to religion that will be "neither an armed proselytism of the people, nor a usurpation of the authority of the princes." And thereupon he undertakes to examine into the condition of those three empires of the extreme East—China, Cochin China, and Corea.

His views on Cochin China, in particular, have a justness which must cause them to be accepted sooner or later, and whatever may have been the fate of his note, we recognize in it the thought that dictated the course of the government when it finally decided to send to those countries sufficient forces to gain a footing and found a lasting establishment.

"Still more recent treaties grant us important previleges in Cochin China; we might justly claim the ownership of Tourania, ceded to France by the Emperor Kia-long. Admiral Cécile failed in his attempt to renew our relations with that empire, lately our friend and ally. Admiral Lapierre was

obliged to repel by force the answer which was prepared for that same demand. If Captain Lapierre, who in this matter so nobly braved the disgrace which a certain shade of public opinion would surely inflict upon him, had served a government like the one that has lately rewarded his services, he would undoubtedly, after the destruction of the Cochin Chinese fleet, have imposed a treaty on the vanquished nation, and France would not have allowed the executioner's axe to strike by order of a blind and cruel prince her noble children, Scheffler and Bonnard, martyred for the faith while French vessels were cruising along the coasts or were fruitlessly stationed at Macao."

This was using noble language and speaking plain French. But when Clerc's note reached the office of the minister, for it did arrive there,* the government was occupied with quite another affair—namely, the Crimean expedition. Permit us to here add a detail which we have from good authority. After the taking of Sebastopol it was desired to learn what had been the *rôle* of the Bishop of Adran, and what rights resulted to France from the alliance formed between King Louis XVI. and the Emperor of Cochin China. At the request of persons in high position, a new note was drawn up in Paris, and it was transmitted by Baron Cauchy, the illustrious geometrician, to Marshal Vaillant, his confrère in the Academy of Sciences, at the institute one day when, as usual,

*It is marked with a stamp bearing these words : "Navy and Colonies. Office of the minister, November 3, 1853."

they occupied neighboring chairs. This was the only place where these two men, whose faith and politics were so different, could meet and to a certain point understand one another. Several years before his death Clerc saw the accomplishment of a wish that was so dear to his heart, and we may judge of the joy he must have felt when in his retreat he learned that the French flag floated over the walls of Saïgon.

While the *rôle* of France thus appeared to him in all its grandeur, and he endeavored to kindle afar the fire with which his noble heart was burning, he was, to his great dislike, obliged to leave Shanghai once more, but not without the hope of returning ; he could not imagine that the *Cassini* would not be employed in protecting the Christian settlements of Kiang-nan and the European interests so closely threatened by the insurgents. He wrote from Hong-Kong July 22: " The *Cassini* is repairing her boilers, and probably by the end of August we will be in such good trim that our cruise may easily be prolonged another two years. Now, if France decides to interfere in China, it is hard for me to believe that the *Cassini* will not be used, since she is on the spot and will be ready for all the various services that can be expected from a steam vessel. Consequently I defer all hope of returning home, and fix no limit to our stay here. The vessels that are to relieve those now at the station have left France, the *Constantine* on the 6th of February, and the *Colbert* at the beginning of March. The *Constantine* is expected daily, and

on her arrival the *Capricieuse* will leave." In short, he would willingly have seen the cruise, which had already lasted nearly three years, continued one or two years more. Behold how an ambition loftier than that he obeyed on entering the navy attached him to a career from which he no longer expected aught for himself, but which was always noble and grand in his eyes when it became the auxiliary of civilization, or, to use the right word, of Christianity!

In the course of September the *Cassini* was anchored in the Taïpa two miles from Macao, when Mr. de Plas received from the French *chargé d'affaires* an invitation to come as quickly as possible to Shanghai, where the European establishments were in the greatest danger. The vessel's repairs were not finished, but the commander did not hesitate; he started the next day, and early in October was at his new post.

This is what had transpired during the *Cassini's* absence from Shanghai: On the 7th of September, at the moment it was least expected, the city was invaded by a band of men in red garments and armed with guns, sabres, and clubs. Before daybreak they are masters of the gates, and at sunrise they already occupy the tribunals and the principal guard-houses. Some mandarins are killed, others flee; the soldiers, to the number of a thousand perhaps, hide so successfully that not a single one is to be seen. At nine o'clock there is a cry in the streets that the people have nothing to fear; posters appear on the walls; they read that any

attempt on property will be punished with death. And in fact several wretches convicted of theft were beheaded. Thus everything was performed in imitation of the great capitals of Europe ; our Chinese rioters proved accomplished masters of the art, and there remained but little for them to learn before they might cease envying the practised revolutionists of Paris.

Scarcely arrived, the commander of the *Cassini*, conjointly with the French consul, takes efficacious measures for the protection of the national establishments. Every evening a guard of sailors is sent to the consulate, and some men are detached to Tom-ka-tou and Shanghai. The French flag is raised on the Jesuit Fathers' house at Tom-ka-tou ; if it is lowered it will be a signal of distress.

The rebels—a collection of Fokienese and Cantonese—were shut up in the fortified portion of the city, whence they defied the imperialists with an audacity increased by the cowardice of their adversaries. It is suspected that they were secretly aided by Europeans clever enough to direct the movement and interested in the success of the insurrection.

The commander of the *Cassini* relates to us a tragicomic incident in which Clerc, always ready for a self-sacrifice, gave proof of his presence of mind and his habitual coolness:

"In the month of November a Chinese fleet was ordered to cannonade the city, and took up a position near Tom-ka-tou, just so as to draw the firing of the insurgents in the direction of the cathedral

and the principal residence of the Fathers. The signal flag was lowered. After having deliberated before God, the commander sent Alexis Clerc in the longboat to learn what was going on, and to put a stop to the firing in that part of the city, if need be. Clerc set out. The boat was saluted with a few balls, which might very well not have been exactly intended for it, and it arrived at Tom-ka-tou, where Father Lemaître (since superior-general of the mission) did not hesitate to offer himself to treat with the Chinese admiral. That dignitary was found at the bottom of the hold of his ship, the noise of the cannon being particularly disagreeable to him. He was made to understand that if he continued to menace, or to cause to be menaced, the residence of Tom-ka-tou by firing on the ramparts of the city, the French commander would interpose with his cannon. Far from being displeased, the admiral received this summons with joy, and gave Lieutenant Clerc and Father Lemaître *carte blanche* to warn the little vessels of his fleet. The captains shared their admiral's satisfaction, and promptly vacated the position. Courage, seconded by extreme good humor in Lieutenant Clerc and Father Lemaître, must have produced a great effect upon the Chinese, for the balls could just as easily have struck the negotiators as the combatants."

Clerc decided that those sorry imperialists were of no great account; still, disgraced as they were in his eyes, he preferred them to the rebels, considering them to be after all the representatives of

established order, and the defenders, such as they were, of a regular government. He wrote to Father Broullion, who was then in France attending to the business of the mission: "Chinese pride, hardy as you know it to be, cannot altogether survive such assaults. The incredible cowardice and the still more incredible stupidity of the attacks the imperialists make on the city are a cause of confusion to themselves, and the fathers in dealing with them really find them no longer the same men. A few such lessons and there will be no more of that contempt with which they have regarded all foreigners to struggle against. This consideration, which is certainly of great weight, seems to me a reason for looking at the revolts less unfavorably, albeit they are but the involuntary cause of this good. On the other hand, we have learned from the letter Mgr. Mouly writes you that in Pekin the Christians have been persecuted and the cross has been torn down. Father René's (Massa) catechist has confessed the faith in tortures, and, on the point of being put to death, he saved his life through the protection of a mandarin whom he had converted. As for me, I would still prefer to lay violent hands on the rebels; but that is out of the question; the plan is to act always as though we were in Europe, and to be governed by an international law that is somewhat fantastic with its scruple about equity."*

* Letter of November 1, 1853, published by Father Broullion in his "Memoir on the Present Condition of the Mission of Kiang-nan." Paris, 1855, p. 334.

Opinions were very much divided. People knew very well what to think of the Fokienese and the Cantonese that occupied Shanghai—regular bandits skilfully organized for pillage ; but the rebels of Kouang-si, masters of Nankin, enjoyed from afar off more prestige, and it was asked if they were not achieving a great revolution to the advantage of Chinese nationality ; for, it must not be forgotten, the reigning dynasty was of Tartar race, dated only from the middle of the seventeenth century, and established itself only by conquest. Among the Europeans whose good wishes were with the insurrection some pretended that the accession of Tai-ping, the emperor of the Kuam-si-jen, could not fail to inaugurate an era of religious liberty. The fact is, the partisans of that mysterious and extremely cunning personage loudly proclaimed themselves as the exterminators of idolatry, and placed in the number of their religious books a translation of St. Matthew and some fragments of the Bible. On the other hand, they had torn down crosses, persecuted and put to death a certain number of Christians ; their chiefs, it was said, practised polygamy, which did not promise a very sincere respect for evangelical morality, and did little credit to the Protestant ministers, some of whom boasted of having been the originators of the movement. What should be thought of them ? Should the insurgents, who were already marching on Pekin, be regarded seriously and ranked as belligerents by the representatives of the European powers ? It was worth the while to be enlightened

about this, and it was decided to go to Nankin to investigate matters, so as to take sides understandingly.

Therefore, at the end of November Commander de Plas receives on board the *Cassini* Mr. de Bourboulon, Minister Plenipotentiary of France; Mme. de Bourboulon, Mr. de Courcy, secretary of the legation, and their suite. At the request of Mr. Edan, consul *ad interim* (Mr. de Montigny having left for France), two Jesuits, Fathers Gotteland and Clavelin, are named to accompany the expedition.

The anchor is weighed; the Yang-tse-kiang is ascended. The draught of the vessel and the moving sandbanks necessitate a careful advance; the travellers have leisure to gaze at the beautiful river, the second in the world, the mouth of which is nearly thirty leagues wide. About noon of the 3d of December they pass Kiang-in, a city of the third order, formerly the centre of numerous Christian settlements, nothing of which remains but the ruins. On the 5th they are at Tchen-kiang-fou, a city of the second order, whose port is formed by the Isle of Gold and the Isle of Silver. Those charming places, ravaged by civil war, offer only desolation to the beholder. Finally, on the 6th, they are in sight of Nankin. The *Cassini* had met two fleets of from two to three hundred sails without experiencing any hostile demonstration. Here, for the first time, the report of a cannon comes from a battery protected by the ramparts, and a ball hisses past the ears of the new arrivals. They

await a second shot before responding; it is not fired, and the explanations, which they make haste to demand, are given in the politest manner. They are satisfied with them.

I will not speak of the interviews of the French legation with the ministers of the Emperor Taiping; Father Clavelin has left a picturesque and animated description of them in a letter published by Father Broullion.* Mr. de Courcy, who was present, says nothing about them in his volume entitled "L'Empire du Milieu." In short, the result was little, if not nothing at all. Clerc anticipated this from the commencement, and on the return of the expedition he congratulated himself that French diplomacy had escaped the danger of compromising, by treating with the rebels, its own dignity and the security of the Christians evangelized by our missionaries. But he had been profoundly moved by the spectacle of desolation offered by that immense city of Nankin, and some time afterwards he wrote: "We walked through a very great part of it, and we saw neither an artisan working at his trade nor a merchant engaged in his traffic. All the houses were more or less dilapidated, and, an extraordinary thing, those even that were inhabited had not been repaired; the doors and windows were still hanging to the hinges, but were not secured! In my opinion there is no longer any right of property recognized in Nankin, and communism is realized to their hearts'

* "Memoir on the Present State of the Mission of Kiang-nan." Appendix, p. 337.

content by the experimenters. The women, separated from their families, even from their husbands, are in little bands penned up in the houses of one quarter; they are under the surveillance of one of their number, who exercises an almost military authority. As to the men—whether it was that the inhabitants of Nankin had taken flight, or that it had been preferred to send them to the field in order to make more sure of the city—nearly all those we saw were very young and generally natives of other provinces.

"All those youths were richly clothed in still new silk garments; but I was more saddened by that luxury than I would have been by poverty, for it is the result of enormous pillage and of the prodigality that belongs to brigandage.

"One can only feel the greatest pity for this unfortunate nation oppressed by two powers, each as bad as the other.

"These people were created to live under the yoke, and if they had the happiness of being subjects of a good government they would not dream of revolt, for, bad enough as that of the Tartars is, nobody is anxious to welcome the new future dynasty.

"Europe is ignorant of her power, and has no longer enough of the spirit of chivalry to care about doing noble deeds outside of her own territory. If these were the days of Magellan and Cortez it would be deemed a joy to do as much as possible for all these people seated in the shadow of death."

On the 18th of December, at noon, the *Cassini* again cast anchor before Shanghai.

"Thus our Nankin expedition," Father Clavelin writes, "was over. Nevertheless, I had to prolong my stay on shipboard, because our good commander desired very much to have a priest on board the *Cassini* for the solemnity of Christmas. Christmas eve we heard the cannon rumbling far into the night; a ball even fell in our midst. Yet, at the moment of beginning Mass, which all the ship's company was present at, there was a perfect silence; this, joined to the recollection of the assistants, to the novelty of the spectacle, to the sentiments inherent in such a festival, and, finally, to the sight of the commander, of four officers, and several non-commissioned officers and sailors coming forward to receive with the piety which distinguished them Holy Communion in presence of the entire assembly—all that made, I say, a profound impression upon me, and that feast will never be obliterated from my memory."

The next day was devoted to the performance of an act of necessary justice. Two catechists of the mission, seized by the rebels, had been treated as spies, and one of them cruelly tortured. The commander of the *Colbert*, recently arrived from France to replace the *Cassini*, exacted a reparation; he was ready, in case of refusal, to discharge his guns. The reparation was made. Liou, chief of the rebels, sent the guilty man with executioners. A pardon was granted; the Chinese were known to be capable of anything; more than once

on similar occasions they had yielded up the innocent in place of the guilty. These proceedings, as generous as they were firm, had an excellent effect both for the honor of the French flag and the consideration shown to those over whom it extended its efficacious protection.

"It is thus," says Father Clavelin, "that, thanks to the representatives of France, we enjoy a perfect, and, under the circumstances, truly extraordinary tranquillity. May it always continue."

It was not fitting to interrupt the recital of the services rendered by the *Cassini* to the mission of Kiang-nan and the European establishments of Shanghai; consequently we have so far shown our hero only in his life of action, reserving to ourselves to afterwards make known the interior labor to which he devoted himself that he might be firmly decided on his vocation when he should return to France. It was the great affair he had already a first time treated of with Father de Ravignan, and with which he desired to occupy himself anew in the residence of Zi-ka-wei, under the direction of an eminent and holy missionary, Father Languillat, now administrator of the diocese of Nankin.

Therefore, shortly before the *Cassini's* departure for Nankin he put himself in retreat; he made the "Spiritual Exercises" fervently, and proceeded with all deliberation to that important act of the choice of a state of life, to the *election*, to use the language of the "Exercises." For this St. Ignatius gives rules of admirable wisdom, and

which, faithfully observed, render a mistake impossible, so to speak. The first and principal is that the eye of our intention be simple; that we have no object other than the glory of God and the salvation of our soul; that our choice tend solely to the attainment of that object. Did Clerc observe this rule well? We shall be able to judge; he brought from Zi-ka-wei the sheet on which he put in writing the determining motives of his election, and we have it before us; we will make some extracts of what is most characteristic.

Proceeding systematically, he successively lays down four questions, which he examines and resolves in the following manner:

"Must I aim at perfection?*

1. This is not necessary to salvation.	1. It is a much surer way of attaining it.
2. It is, perhaps, beyond my power of perseverance.	2. Nothing is impossible to God; the days pass one by one.
3. If my courage fails in an undertaking which is not necessary, it will thereby be much weakened for what is absolutely necessary.	3. Not to undertake is to be already beaten without fighting, especially if the matter has been reflected upon.
	4. It is nobler.
	5. It is more pleasing to our Lord.
	6. The interior voice of conscience reproaching me for relaxations which are not

* We need not remark that the left-hand column contains the reasons *against*, and the right-hand column the reasons *for* an affirmative answer to the questions.

	sins, is the voice of our Lord jealous of my perfection. 7. Our Lord vomits the tepid out of his mouth. 8. He to whom more has been forgiven owes more gratitude.

"Therefore I ought to aim at perfection, and I will.

"Must I enter the religious state in order to aim at perfection?

1. I must provide for my father's wants.	1. My brother Jules will gladly do this by himself. I will also be able to leave my father some of my savings of this cruise. 2. I experience a great weariness which neither service on shore nor at sea drives away. 3. It seems to me impossible not to be contaminated by the social life on board ship. 4. It is an exception to find the helps of religion on shipboard. 5. I have no particular attraction for my calling; so far my career does not bind me. 6. Our Lord gives me strength to embrace without difficulty poverty and chastity; it is imprudent to risk these gifts in the world.

7. Tending to perfection in the world would be a singular vocation; the experience of these last four years proves that it would be a fault to wait longer.

8. I have already lost in the matter of charity.

9. There is no perfection without obedience.

10. It is evident to me that in religion one is much more useful to himself and others.

11. It is the royal road.

12. How can I help foreseeing the assaults of vainglory that will follow the most ordinary advancement in my career.

13. It is the haven.

14. It has been for four years the more or less definite term to which I have aspired.

"Therefore I ought to enter the religious state, and I will.

"What religious order must I choose?

1. The Society of Jesus is the most numerous and the most securely established in France.

2. In it one has less reason to pretend to a distinguished position.

3. It embraces all good

works, and it is only the suggestion of the evil spirit or of pride that can make a man believe that it does not employ him in his right place.

4. It assumes the entire responsibility of the career it gives you; for example, you do not take upon yourself to receive the priesthood.

5. It takes the most admirable and minute care of the salvation and perfection of its children.

6. It allows no compromises with the rule: dispensations, etc.

"Therefore I ought to enter the Society of Jesus, and I will.

"When shall I enter the Society of Jesus?

1. To quit the *Cassini* would be not only extraordinary, but, I think, impossible.

2. It would be to choose for myself a destination among all those which the Society might give me.

3. It seems to me natural and suitable to obtain my father's consent, at least to myself inform him of my determination.

4. It seems to me useless

and dangerous to render any other duties to the world.

"Therefore, after a very few days spent in Paris, I ought to go to the novitiate that will have been designated to me, and I will.

ALEXIS CLERC.

"GIVEN AT ZI-KA-WEI, October 17."

Such are the important and holy resolutions which Alexis had taken before God, and which he would accomplish without delay.

We pass over the circumstances of the return to France, which would be of little interest now. Favored on her voyage by superb weather, the *Cassini* entered the harbor of Lorient July 5, 1854. She happened right in the midst of preparations for war, and, without having time to so much as look about, was enveloped in the general commotion caused by the Crimean expedition. The day after his arrival Alexis wrote to his father:

"The port of Lorient is in twice its usual activity, and they are making extraordinary efforts to get the *Cassini* ready to start in six days for the Baltic Sea, and to carry thither I don't know what. However, all this fine zeal does not affect me much, for I was put on shore the day of our arrival, and I have refused to ask to continue this new tail of the campaign.

"Nevertheless, there has been some sort of confusion, so that to-day at four o'clock I must return to the ship, after having been landed twice. Still, I consider my detachment as

real, and I hope to obtain a little permit of fifteen days for Paris. I cannot say when I will arrive."

After so long an absence he was anxious to embrace his father and his brother Jules, to congratulate the latter on the union he had just contracted with a lady worthy of him, and to participate like a good brother in that family event, with the circumstances of which he was still unacquainted, deprived as he had been of all correspondence since his voyage to Singapore. He cared but middlingly to share the new fortune of the *Cassini*, which was to be used as a transport. It was in a rather more military manner that he would have chosen to serve if the thing had depended upon him.

"One must accommodate one's self to the times," he wrote two days later, "and if I could be good for anything, it is not a cruise of three years and a half—which has not exhausted me—that would deter me from serving again directly." "Madame my sister-in law," he courteously adds, "has been so kind as to write me a few words. I am very grateful to her, and I hope that, being persons of good-will, it will not be long before we are truly brother and sister. Patience! patience! and everything will be arranged to please everybody."

To be brief, notwithstanding the extreme fatigue of her crew and the bad state of her boilers, the *Cassini* was ordered to tow several ships and frigates to Lorient, to Brest, or to Cherbourg, after which it was finally decided to put her out of commission, and this decision was carried into effect early in August. Then only Clerc obtained per-

mission to visit his father. But before starting he offered his services for the Baltic Sea; they were not accepted, all the positions being already filled. Eight days later Clerc was at the Novitiate of Saint Acheul, thus fulfilling to the letter the resolution with which he had concluded his *election:*

"After a very few days spent in Paris I ought to go to the novitiate that will have been designated to me, and I will."

CHAPTER X.

ALEXIS CLERC IN THE SOCIETY OF JESUS—SAINT-ACHEUL.

At last, after four years of waiting, Clerc had it in his power to respond to the call of the Lord, which made itself heard in his heart in a way that was ever stronger and more urgent. Still, all was not done ; there were bonds to be broken before he could be received into the novitiate, and it was not difficult to foresee that paternal opposition, singularly favored by circumstances, would not be disarmed by the first blow. Would it not even declare itself inflexible and relentless ? Alas ! we shall see it but too plainly—this was what it did, and it cruelly kept its word to the end.

Clerc must have had the presentiment of the obstacles that awaited him and of the rude combat he would have to sustain when, having communicated his resolution to Father de Ravignan immediately on his arrival at Lorient, he received this rather discouraging reply :

"Paris, 35 Rue de Sèvres,
July 18, 1854.

"My Very Dear Friend: Your letter brings me the sweetest consolation. May God's grace keep you and preserve in your soul all the gifts of

his goodness. Let us pray that his will may be perfectly accomplished in you.

"It seems to me that you ought to wait still longer before taking a final resolution. Your resignation now would be ill-timed. Undoubtedly we must expect difficulties and obstacles; nevertheless, let us fear nothing when we seek only the glory of God and the welfare of our soul.

"You cannot doubt of my tender interest; it follows you everywhere. Farewell, then, till we meet. Let us be united in the heart of our Lord and in the firmest hope.

"My kind remembrances to the commander.

"X. DE RAVIGNAN."

It is to be believed that Father de Ravignan was satisfied with the explanations Clerc gave him when he came to Paris, and that then, from the opponent he had been, he declared himself an ally and auxiliary; it seems to us even impossible for him to have done otherwise if the generous postulant showed him the election he had made at Shanghai, and which ten months before had received the approbation of a religious as wise and enlightened as Father Languillat. Had not the illustrious and holy religious (Father de Ravignan), in his excellent work "On the Existence and Institute of the Jesuits," himself marked out the path which he saw his young friend treading with so firm a step? Had he not, in treating of the *election* and in recalling his own experience, written these lines, wherein Alexis must have recognized his own course: "When the soul is tranquil, when it is in

peaceful possession of all its faculties, it will balance, it will weigh, the opposing motives, consulting God in prayer. It will place itself in imagination on its death-bed at the feet of the Sovereign Judge, or else in presence of an unknown person, seen for the first time, who exposes his doubts, asks a solution of them, and appeals for a free and disinterested advice. Light is thus obtained, the choice is determined, all the repugnances of nature are immolated on the altar of sacrifice. Jesus Christ has conquered, and the faithful disciple a conqueror with him, sings and celebrates his victory by consecrating to the Lord his strength, his labors, and his whole life, either in the apostolate of the world or in the sacred army of the Church. O God ! I bless thee and give thee thanks ; it was thus thou didst order my life and for ever assure my happiness." *

This is language that will be understood by whoever has gone over the same road and arrived at the same destination, but which was unintelligible to Mr. Clerc, Sr., not only on account of his paternal affection, which shrank from that great sacrifice, but also, it must be acknowledged, in consequence of the prejudices with which his mind was obscured.

What passed between him and his son when the latter announced that he wanted to be a Jesuit and that he was going forthwith to knock at the door of the Novitiate of Saint-Acheul ? We can easily

* "On the Existence and Institute of the Jesuits," chap. iii.—"The Election, or Choice of a State of Life."

guess. Alexis was doubtless respectful, but he was firm; he had appreciated the necessity and propriety of obtaining his father's consent if he could; not succeeding, he remembered that Jesus Christ said: "*He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me*"; and he started for Saint-Acheul.

He, however, left behind him the hope that he would return; for, having spent only eight days at the most in Paris, he had had time neither to receive the acceptance of his resignation nor to arrange his little affairs like a man who is soon to die to the world and to whom things here below will henceforth be as nothing. But when he had once reached the threshold of the novitiate and learned with certainty that he would be admitted, reflecting on the assaults that awaited him in Paris and on the too evident impossibility of winning any consent from his father, he thought he ought not again to leave the port he had entered, in order that it might be well understood that his resolution was definitive and irrevocable; consequently he wrote to Mr. Clerc:

"My Dear Father: I thank you for the kindness you showed me when I communicated to you a project which deeply afflicted you. Assuredly I would be glad to spare you pain, but I feel very sensibly that in explaining my motives I shall succeed but imperfectly. I obey the conviction that I ought to take this step notwithstanding the sacrifices it imposes upon me. The constancy with which I have adhered to this project during four

years, and amid such varied circumstances, all suited to distract me from it as you hoped, indicates sufficiently that nothing remains but to execute it. Men do not usually give so much mature reflection to even capital resolutions, and I should fail in a duty if, for the sake of preserving some advantages of comfort and vanity, I should refuse to respond to the voice of my reason enlightened by every available means. Therefore, dear father, believe that in this matter I am not acting under the illusion of any impulse, under the influence of any enthusiasm ; the few days I spent with you must, I think, have convinced you of this. Why, then, anticipate useless regrets, or, to speak more exactly, why fear them ? In reality, have they not been anticipated and averted by so much reflection, by the advice of experienced persons, and by so long a temporizing.

"I know that your displeasure springs only from your disinterested affection, which dreads for me an evil that I seem to be running into blindly; while, on the contrary, the evil is in remaining where I find myself out of place, and where my conscience can no longer be at peace. This is a little interior mystery which you can easily penetrate ; the truth is, I abandon an apparent good and a real evil, and I embrace a real good and an apparent evil.

" Nevertheless, although reason justifies my conduct, it is not of itself sufficient to dictate it ; something besides reason is required to impose even a light sacrifice, and it is to that noble part of our

soul which then commands our will that I desire to address myself, to the end that the love of what is best, most perfect, may help you to bear what I do with a generous intention.

"I inform you, then, my dear papa, that they consent to receive me in the novitiate ; it remains for me to follow faithfully the way wherein God calls me, and for you, my dear father, to take part in my entrance in the religious life by accepting it as far as possible for the love of God.

"I believe it is wisest for me not to return to Paris, so as to avoid the untimely visits I would have to make to persons who are ignorant of my resolution, and also the monotonous representations which strangers would not fail to make me. I feel myself already passably awkward, and I should not know at all what air to assume ; moreover, after such a drawing back the leap would be only more difficult. The very small number of business matters that I have left behind can be arranged by correspondence. Besides, I shall never have been so near you ; when you choose you can come to see me in three hours.

"May Almighty God give us strength to accomplish what he asks of us !

"Farewell, dear papa. I embrace you most tenderly, and I pray God to render this blow less hard by giving you the conviction that we are obeying his holy will. A. Clerc.

"Saint-Acheul, August 19."

This letter, at once so tender and so respectful, filled up the measure of that poor father's grief

and despair, for it made him feel that the struggle he was going to engage in with his son could only prove for both of them an inexhaustible source of bitterness. But passion does not reason, and, cost what it might, he was firmly resolved to oppose Alexis' vocation, even at the price of the happiness they had always found in the union, hitherto so easy and natural, of their hearts. Directly after Alexis' departure for Saint-Acheul he had composed a note in which he taxed his ingenuity to find reasons to divert his son from his project. Before it was for Alexis' own good that he ought to remain in the navy, now it was for the sake of his father; and becoming an egotist at will, he imagined a distant future when Clerc, having retired from the service, would receive his father at his fireside in his humble bachelor's establishment, a desire which he expressed with a good deal of reserve, acknowledging that, to tell the truth, it would be difficult for him to be better off than he was with his son Jules and his daughter-in-law.

But soon he has recourse to other arms which he did not think of at first, and he adds in a *post-scriptum:* "I beg you to yet reflect that you cannot send in your resignation at this time. It would be cowardice to desert your post at the moment when there may be danger for you to incur." Clerc could feel quite easy about this last point; his resolution, thank God, dated far enough back for the Crimean war to have nothing to do with it. If his offer to serve in the Baltic had been accepted, he would have waited till the close of the cam-

paign to send in his resignation, and that not through fear of dishonor, which could not attach to him, but from an exalted idea of military duty. We have already seen in China, as we shall see later at La Roquette, whether he was a man to bargain about his life and to retreat before bullets and balls.

Mr. Clerc concluded with an adjuration and a threat: "I adjure you by all the authority a father can have over his son to defer your intention, at least until the close of the war.

"If you do not listen to my prayer, write me no more; all intercourse between you and me will be at an end."

This certainly was a terrible assault; but Clerc had foreseen all, was prepared for all; for the love of him who on the cross endured an incomprensible abandonment by his Heavenly Father he from that moment resigned himself to be, if such were God's will, denied and rejected by his father according to the flesh.

Father de Ravignan was then at Saint-Acheul; he frequently came there in the autumn to seek the solitude that was always dear to him, and in labor and prayer to renew his strength as in the days when, still obscure, he there consecrated the first fruits of his talents and zeal to the teaching of theology. Mr. Clerc, who knew very well that the counsels of the eminent religious had already prolonged by four years his son's stay in the world, wrote to him in strict confidence, expecting thus to obtain that Alexis, relinquishing his ideas of

vocation, would return to Paris. He doubtless flattered himself that he had found an infallible means of conquering his son's obstinacy. Vain hope! Here is what Father de Ravignan replied:

"SAINT-ACHEUL, August 24, 1854.

"SIR: I understand perfectly the affliction of a father's heart, and I sympathize with you. But you must, likewise, understand that in a question as serious as this of your son's, I, we all, can only leave him to himself. He is free to-day, he will be free during the whole time of his novitiate (two years), if he remains; he will contract no engagements by the vows of religion until after the two years have elapsed. He will thus have leisure to examine his vocation and to decide with the full knowledge of what he is doing. At his age, with his experience of the world, he is in less danger of illusion than many others. Conscience, the conviction of the soul in the presence of God, are what is most sacred and most to be respected; and all authorities, as well as all sentiments, I dare to say it, should bow before a conscientious determination of which God alone is the judge.

"I hope, sir, that you will kindly accept my excuses for not being able to do what you desire. I offer with my most sincere good wishes the assurance of my high esteem.

"X. DE RAVIGNAN."

Mr. Clerc did not yield; he had sworn to be irreconcilable, and he was. It was for him a point of honor and a sort of engagement of conscience; his political and religious liberalism, his lofty patriot-

ism, his paternal ambition, and even his affection which he believed outraged, all conspired to strengthen him in that determined and aggressive opposition which from the commencement left no room to hope for peace or truce.

Behold what combats and heartrendings, so keenly felt by a delicate soul, met Clerc on his entrance to the religious life! At the first step he felt himself assailed in his dearest affections, and, a voluntary victim, there was nothing for him to do but to bend beneath the cross which he was to carry all his life.

He was as yet only in his first probation. Thus is called a period of from ten to twelve days devoted to a reciprocal confidence, the postulant making himself known, while at the same time becoming acquainted with the constitutions of the Society; as is evident, a necessary confidence to avoid on both sides all misunderstandings, all surprise in so important a matter. Father Alexander Mallet, master of novices, and in that capacity charged with examining Clerc's dispositions, his greater or less fitness for the life and employments of the Society, was a truly interior man, austere and gentle, of frail constitution and sickly appearance, not without warmth of heart when there was question of the good of souls and the interests of God's glory, but very slightly accessible to enthusiasm, and particularly attentive to keep himself on his guard as well as to caution others against even generous illusions. It is plain that if this character suited Clerc it was especially by its con-

trasts with his own, by the advantage it was to him to find in his spiritual guide qualities with which he perhaps was not himself provided in the same degree. Before admitting him to the novitiate, Father Mallet, who, strictly speaking, might have relied on Father Languillat, and simply and solely confirmed the election Clerc had made a Zi-ka-wei, either to put the eagerness of his desires to the proof or to obtain more light on a subject about which there can never be too much, directed him to make a new election in regular form during his probation.

We may be allowed to mention by the way that this shows plainly enough whether we catch subjects on the wing to enroll them in spite of themselves, or by main force, under our banner, and whether the *compelle intrare* with which we are so much reproached, is truly our motto. Clerc was certainly not a subject to be disdained; let us say more, he was by reason of his antecedents a particularly precious recruit for a religious order that was at that very time opening military and naval preparatory schools. Nothing of all that, however, caused the superiors to think that they might lightly treat the great affair of vocation.

Clerc made a new election. As may be readily supposed, it was not notably different from the first, at least in its foundation; but under the stroke of trial and contradiction the resolution to forsake all in order to belong to Jesus Christ is emphasized with a redoubled energy that has its

value and its eloquence. We will quote some of the most remarkable passages:

To the first question he puts himself: "Shall I follow the counsels or only the precepts?" he makes the following replies: "It would be a shameful relapse to keep only to the precepts after having already tried for a long time to follow the counsels.

"It is a very cowardly relapse to yield without fighting solely through fear of the battle.

"It is an unpardonable contempt of God's grace, which has for some time enabled me to walk without much difficulty in the way of his counsels.

"How great an assurance of salvation is the way of the counsels! For me to choose any other is like choosing perdition.

"Do I owe less after the grace of so extraordinary a conversion?

"Finally, I wish to follow the counsels because I love God and desire to serve him to my utmost.

"I feel strength to do it, with the grace of our Lord.

"I desire with all my heart, with all my mind, and with all my strength, to serve now and all the days of my life the Lord my God, my most merciful, most amiable, and most sweet Saviour, by endeavoring, with the help of his holy grace, to imitate him by showing the most entire docility to his counsels and inspirations. Amen.

"This way of the counsels is the way of our Lord

Jesus : *Qui vult post me venire, abneget semetipsum et tollat crucem suam.*" *

To the second question : "Ought I to embrace the religious life, or remain in the world ?" he replies :

"The renunciation of my position is a little sacrifice ; I desire to offer it to Almighty God.

"The virtues are practised in the religious life ; in the world they are at the most only meditated.

"Experience proves to me that for three years I have been daily going backwards.

"There are much greater dangers on shore.

"Hereafter there will also be greater ones on shipboard, where I shall be engaged in more important and honorable employments."

In fact, Clerc, on his return from China, had been proposed for a command and for the Legion of Honor. The right moment for making *a little sacrifice* to God was precisely then ; later the sacrifice would doubtless have been something more, but to defer for that motive would have been to tempt God and to presume too much on his own strength.

Other reasons for embracing the religious life :

"Holy obedience, which I have poorly practised on shipboard, I desire that henceforth you should be my supreme ruler, and I hope to practise you better when I shall be under obligation to do so continually, because then you will be to me a strict law and not a work of supererogation.

* If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross (Matt. xvi. 24).

"The good example I may give—the only plausible reason they urge for my remaining in the world—is greater by my abandoning all things for the sake of serving God better."

Third question: "What order shall I enter?"

Reply: "The Society of Jesus.

"I believe it the best suited to procure my spiritual profit.

"It always employs each of its subjects to the greatest possible advantage, so as to give him the satisfaction of doing more for the glory of God than he could outside the Society.

"It rightly calls itself the Society of Jesus, because its members live in the presence and in the society of Jesus, on whom they daily meditate.

"It is justly called the Company of Jesus, because Jesus is the captain who leads it to combat, and because with him it suffers persecution and contempt.

"Finally, I love the Society.

"Accordingly, I desire to enter the Society of Jesus.

"I would advise a man in my position, a stranger to me in all besides, to abandon everything and to enter the novitiate with the firm intention of afterwards making his vows.

"I desire to be able on the day of my death and on the Day of Judgment, to congratulate myself upon having this day forsaken the world for the Society of Jesus. "A. CLERC.

"SAINT-ACHEUL, Feast of St. Augustine, 1854."

"The thought of laboring for the glory of God

by procuring the salvation of my neighbor has scarcely ever crossed my mind without moving my heart and inspiring me with zeal. I have most usually banished this thought as being not yet seasonable, while at the same time finding pleasure in believing that it would be some day."

How was it possible to resist such manifest signs of vocation and such persevering desires? Therefore the superiors resisted no longer, and that very day, the Feast of St. Augustine, the doors of the novitiate opened to Alexis. His youth had resembled that of the Bishop of Hippo; he promised himself to imitate that great penitent in the sincerity of his conversion and the ardor of his charity. Dating from that 28th of August, he is no longer of the world, and he finds his chief delight in seeking to be forgotten. His discharge reached him towards the middle of September (it is dated the 15th); he begged his brother to settle his little business matters. The small sum of money that was still due him (doubtless the last payment of his officer's salary) he several times offered to his father; Mr. Clerc, faithful to his threat of absolute estrangement, refused it. Alexis then offered it to the Society to indemnify it for the expenses it would incur on his account during his novitiate and studies.

Here, then, begins a new life which has nothing striking about it, nothing exterior, *a life hidden in God with Jesus Christ,* so hidden that worldlings look upon it as a death, and it horrifies them like the tomb. No more voyages, no more distant expe-

ditions ; the uniform, which in France always enjoys such a prestige, replaced by a poor cassock—that is to say, by a vesture which the world has little honor for and does not always tolerate ; finally, occupations which recall to the religious the humility of Nazareth, but which for that same reason refuse to furnish matter for a detailed narrative ; wherefore, the Evangelists themselves employed only a few lines to relate the infancy and the first thirty years of the Saviour Jesus.

Still, we are able to penetrate into Clerc's interior, thanks to some private notes he preserved of his novitiate, and which contain his true history and the faithful portrait of his soul during that period. In addition to these, we have the recollections of the persons who were then his companions, recollections that are necessarily very vague, since the humble novice took all the pains he could to efface himself, as it were, and succeeded admirably.

The first trial he had to go through—the first *experiment,* to use the language of the institute—was to make the "Spiritual Exercises" of St. Ignatius during a space of thirty days ; to shut himself up, so to speak, after the example of the founder of the Society, in the grotto of Manresa, and there to consider his last end, his duties towards his Creator and his God, the enormity of sin and all the evils that follow it, the malice of the sinner, his own errors, the faults personal to him (Alexis) during the whole course of his life, and, as though this conversion was the first, to wash all his past

in the tears of a sincere contrition and in the waters of penance. But, after these meditations of the purgative life, which take up the first week, all the rest of the time is devoted to the contemplation and imitation of Jesus Christ. The disciple of St. Ignatius considers our amiable Saviour as his king and captain; he responds to his call, ranges himself under his standard, and places his happiness and his pride in following him as closely as possible. Now, there are souls more or less valiant even among those who thus attach themselves to the Lord Jesus; they embrace his cross with more or less fervor, they are more or less courageous in throwing off the livery of the world to clothe themselves with that of a crucified God. It is in this that Clerc signalizes himself from the very first and shows himself brave among the brave. The greatest self-abnegation, continual mortification—such are the practical means proposed to those who are ambitious to rise to the holy folly of the cross. Abnegation, mortification, and especially *continual abnegation*, these words are harsh, and they terrify nature; we can reconcile ourselves to the words and the thing only by a generous abandonment, an unreserved fidelity to the grace that urges us not to remain but half way.

Let us see if Clerc was truly faithful, or if he capitulated with the enemy. There is still another election for him to make—the choice of the degree of perfection which he desires to attain with the help of God's grace.

"I protest before the divine Majesty of God, before the Blessed Virgin and all the Heavenly Court, that I neither have nor desire to have in this election any intention other than that of choosing what will be most pleasing to God, and most useful to my perfection in the state to which grace has called me.

"Feeling, and having several times felt, a most filial confidence in the goodness of God, who will aid me to accomplish what he counsels me, a most lively charity urging me to be generous towards God and to labor for my perfection with strength and ardor, and my soul finding in this disposition tranquillity and peace in God our Lord; while the opposite disposition plunges my soul into darkness, trouble, low and gross attractions, disquietude of emotions and temptations; while it casts mistrust upon my vocation, my perseverance therein and the graces God will grant me to persevere; while it renders my soul idle, tepid and melancholy, and as though separated from Jesus Christ our Lord; —I desire literally, according to Rule 12, *to seek in the Lord the greatest abnegation of myself, and, as far as I shall be able* (that is, as far as possible) *continual mortification in all things.*

"I understand by abnegation a perfect obedience, an entire sacrifice of my own opinions in my intercourse with my brethren, the desire not to distinguish myself in anything, a perfect obedience to and a perfect observance of Rule 13: *In exercendis, etc. . . si quidem injunctum fuerit ut in eis se*

exerceat ; * which I shall beg the father master to be good enough to assign me.

"I understand by continual mortification in all things the uninterrupted suffering of the body in some part and in all manners : therefore, to wear the chain constantly, to fast without intermission and to do violence to my taste, to sleep on the floor and all dressed or on a plank in my bed, to take the discipline every day at least during an *Ave*, and more if I feel the devotion up to as many as three without asking special permission. This is what I desire to do and without retrenching anything of it, with God's grace and the father master's permission, in spite of the revolts of the flesh and the artifices of the devil.

"Moreover, knowing by experience that my conscience reproaches me for all relaxations of mortification, to do less would be to turn a deaf ear to grace ; grace will accomplish what certainly I alone would not dare to undertake, nor even to propose to myself.

"Having then prayed to our Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart, I consider :

"1. All that the masters of the spiritual life say in general about mortification.

"2. That it is especially recommended in the beginning of the religious life.

"3. That I, more than any one else, have need of it to wash away my past sins.

*This Rule 13 regards the exercise of lowly and humiliating employments, and is the one wherein St. Ignatius counsels his children to seek with most eagerness those that are most repugnant to nature.

"4. That it is a duty of gratitude for benefits as great as they are unmerited.

"5. That it is the best way of imitating our Lord.

"6. That it is, according to Rule 12, the best means of attaining to that love of contempt and that horror of the world which is the spirit of the Society.

"7. That if a single thing be granted to sensuality, my soul will instantly take advantage of it; that, consequently, my mortification must be continual and in all things.

"Besides, there is nothing inconvenient in this *régime*. 1. Because I am sufficiently robust. 2. Because it contains nothing in itself that can injure the health. 3. Because, having neither charge nor employment in the novitiate, I can endure some discomfort without inconvenience.

"8. That this mortification will help me very much to attain abnegation which is more difficult.

"9. That is enables one to attain almost at once to the practice of Rule 29.

"10. That the declaration of Jesus to religious is formal: '*Qui vult post me venire, abneget semetipsum et tollat crucem suam.*'"*

Behold the crucified life which Clerc joyfully embraces for the love of Jesus Christ! With a matchless sincerity towards God and towards himself, he declares war to the death against self-love, and at the first blow cuts himself off from the

* "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross."—(Luke ix. 23).

slightest satisfactions, so as to leave nature no hope. This is not all: in order to make more sure of himself in this difficult enterprise, and to in some sort constrain himself to the execution of these heroic resolutions, he will engage himself by a vow; but, joining prudence to generosity, he will make only a temporary vow which he will renew every month, the whole, be it well understood, with the approbation of his superior and spiritual director, the master of novices.

"Thou knowest, my God," he writes in his journal, "that I have the intention of engaging myself by a vow made on the first Friday of each month, to follow during that month the rule of mortification that shall be definitely approved by the father master. I offer these mortifications to thee, to thy Sacred Heart encircled with thorns and pierced with a lance, to the Immaculate Heart transfixed with a sword of sorrow of Mary, thy holy Mother. I pray thee, if thou dost accept this offering, to make me feel a lively compassion for thy passion, a deep hatred of my sins, and a great love for thy infinite goodness."

His prayer is heard, and in proportion as he meditates on the passion of the Saviour Jesus he feels growing with his love his desire of resembling that Saviour in all things—in his agony and abandonment, in his meek endurance of the rage let loose against him, in his abasement and opprobriums.

"*Jesus before Herod.*—Resolved to ask of Jesus neither a miracle, nor a singular grace, nor rare consolations, nor a new state of soul. These are

only desires springing from curiosity, sensuality, and pride. I ask, O Jesus ! to combat these three concupiscences, and to receive thy graces and favors in order to love and serve thee better.

"Resolved not to speak to satisfy my own curiosity nor a vain curiosity in others; to clothe myself with the white robe of Herod, to be the plaything of his whole band.

"O my God ! we cannot strike down our pride except by humiliations; therefore send them to thy proud servant. Order that in spite of all his pains he may make a ridiculous *Exemplum,* and that he may be covered with confusion. And let it be the same for the *Toni.** Give me only the grace to profit by thy fatherly lessons. O Jesus ! let me always look upon thee clothed with that white robe, thine eyes cast down, and thy lips preserving an unbroken silence."

Here is how he converses the following day with Jesus condemned to death :

"How far wilt thou follow me and imitate me ? How many strokes of the scourge art thou willing to receive for my sake ? Wilt thou also be bound and despoiled of thy garments ? Wilt thou go so far as to shed a few drops of blood ? How many ? Wilt thou clothe thyself with the purple mantle ? Dost thou desire also to feel some thorns of my crown ?—I desire, O Jesus ! to go as far as thou wilt call me. I have no wish to turn aside a single

* The *Toni*, as well as the *Exemplum Marianum* (preaching on some example relating to the devotion to Mary), are oratorical exercises customary in the novitiates.

stroke nor to avoid a single thorn thou dost destine for me. I desire to suffer and to be humbled for thee as much as is thy will. Thou dost give strength to do what thou dost ask, therefore I beg thee to ask a great deal of me. Oh! to suffer for thee, my Jesus, to be covered with opprobrium for thy sake, but to love thee! Behold my happiness. To love thee, to love thee! Give me to love thee, and then do with me what thou wilt. '*Amorem tui solum cum gratia tua mihi dones, et dives sum satis, nec aliud quidquam ultra posco.*'" *

After he has so generously taken part in the mysteries of the passion and death of the Saviour of men, Jesus crowns his desires, and with an infinite sweetness permits him to share all the joys of his glorious resurrection.

"Lovest thou me?" These words which Jesus, come forth from the tomb, addresses to St. Peter, he also hears them, he replies to them; and, Jesus again speaking to him, there is another loving dialogue between the faithful disciple and the well beloved of his heart.

"'Lovest thou me'?—O Lord! I owe thee my life, my preservation, the light of my reason, my faith, my baptism, my pardon after ten thousand mortal offences, my vocation, and still more, thy love which completely embraces me. Oh! yes, Lord, I love thee; I call thee to witness that I love thee. Thou knowest that I love thee, thou

* "Give me only thy love and thy grace, and I am rich enough and ask for nothing more."—*Words of the "Suscipe," a prayer of St. Ignatius.*

who knowest all things. And as reparation for so many crimes, dost thou exact only this testimony of my love? Alas! my God, why is it that I cannot love thee more? But if it be true that to love is to wish to love, O my Lord! then, truly, I love thee, for I wish to love thee with all my soul, with all my strength, and with all my heart. I do not want to have a thought, an intention, a power, an affection in my being that is not thine and for thee. Is it possible that thou art so good as to be so anxious for the love of such a miserable creature, and that thou hast done so much to gain his love? What advantage dost thou draw from it?—Only thy love.—This is the last, the highest mark of thy love, Lord, that thou dost desire nothing else but my love! But it is not all yet: as the price of my love thou dost give me to feed thy lambs, and thou art pleased to clothe me with the priesthood—that is to say, I am to be raised even to that sublime dignity of performing acts which are all divine, such as consecrating and absolving. And if I love thee, thou wilt come into me, and by me and with me continue thy mediation, thy redemption, and thy omnipotent and glorious holocaust.—Silence.—Consume my heart with thy love.—What a question! *Lovest thou me?*"

Such were Clerc's sentiments at the close of his long retreat made at Saint-Acheul under the direction of Father Mallet in December, 1854. His whole novitiate was the putting in practice of the resolution he took at the commencement, and we know from good authority that if later in the col-

leges where he had to spend his strength in all varieties of employment, he was not permitted that frequent use of exterior mortification, he never ceased to treat his body with extreme severity.

The house of Saint-Acheul, before the first revolution an abbey of Génovévans (Regular Canons of St. Genevieve attached to the adjoining old cathedral), and from 1814 to 1828 a celebrated and flourishing college, was after many vicissitudes become one of the most important establishments belonging to the Society in France, and it then counted, as it does now, three distinct communities united under the authority of one superior, and forming in reality only one great family composed of resident fathers, juvenists, and novices. The resident fathers were occupied with the duties of the sacred ministry, being confessors, preachers, and missionaries in the neighboring towns and rural districts; some, advanced in years or burdened with infirmities, limited themselves to preaching by example, and nobody, whatever they themselves might say and think about it, regarded those invalids of the apostolate as useless servants. The juvenists, or young scholastics recently come from the novitiate, were prepared by a year or two of rhetoric for teaching grammar and belles-lettres in the colleges; they were older than the novices, if not always in years, at least by seniority in the religious life. Finally, the novices, to the number of fifty, of whom from thirty to forty were priests or scholastics and the rest coadjutor brothers, made

under a special direction the first apprenticeship to the duties of their vocation; in that large family they held the place of children; but they were not, as may be readily supposed, spoiled children, although they were the objects of the tenderest interest and the most paternal solicitude. The Latin language has a charming word, *repuerascere*, to become a child again; the word is in Cicero, but the thing is met only among Christians, and it is especially in novitiates that it is seen to flourish and prosper. Happy childhood of the soul that with docility abandons itself to all the inspirations of grace, to the good pleasure of God manifested to it by the voice of superiors! Amiable simplicity! Innocence regained and ceaselessly rejuvenated in the blood of the Divine Lamb! And with that the joy, the inmost satisfaction of heart, which is the pledge and foretaste of the happiness of heaven! Oh! how well one then understands the words of the Divine Master presenting little children to his disciples: "The kingdom of heaven is for such as these" (Matt. xix. 14).

Clerc found in the novitiate all he had sought for so long, and he there practised freely, from morning to night, the religious virtues for which he hungered and thirsted—poverty, chastity, obedience, mortification of the senses, recollection in God, forgetfulness and annihilation of self in order to be closely united to God. When he wished to humble and abase himself, opportunities were not wanting, and he seized them with the eagerness of a miser who has discovered a treasure. Although

meditation and spiritual reading fill the largest place in the novice's daily regulation, there is also once or twice a day a considerable time reserved for manual labors—sweeping the dormitories and corridors, scrubbing the house from top to bottom, aiding the coadjutor brothers in the domestic offices, the refectory, the infirmary, the kitchen, etc. Behold, certainly, in a numerous community a rich field for the exercise of *lowly and humiliating employments*, and when one well knows how to cultivate it, as did our humble and fervent novice, he finds a new harvest to reap every day.

One of his fellow-novices writes us the following: "I remember the novitiate was greatly edified at seeing that naval officer as simple and fervent as any one else, if not more so. One day in particular he gave me a sort of admiring surprise when he hurried to our admonitor * and requested as a favor to be named for a work of the most ungrateful and humble description. If I remember right, a pouring rain had inundated a dark and foul hole; it was necessary to wade in the dirty water, soak it up, etc. The lieutenant considered the unpleasant job as belonging quite naturally to him, and he solicited the appointment with a thorough juvenile ardor which but partially concealed an intense desire of humiliation."

One of his room-mates (for each novice does not have a room to himself) discovered one night the secret of one of his sufferings which did not enter

* The brother charged with distributing the employments to the other novices.

into the programme of mortifications he had written out during his retreat. Having heard a groan that was evidently forced from him by pain, the novice interrogated him, and Clerc, pressed by questions, was obliged to explain and confess that his trouble was already of long standing, for he had contracted it at college. Falling backwards in some violent exercise, he had received a large wound which had never perfectly healed, and in which there were still splinters of bone. When he felt them at the surface he did not apply to the surgeon or the infirmarian, but extracted them himself as well as he could ; in that way he had not much to do in order to suffer constantly, according to his resolution, in some part of his body.

There is but one voice about his gaiety, his good humor, the charm of his society, and the affability of his character—natural qualities always noticeable in him, but purified, ennobled, and perfected by grace.

The more clear-sighted saw therein an abundant source of merits and the proof of the strong hand with which he ruled himself; for that peace he visibly enjoyed, and which was reflected from his whole person, was the price of his victories.

"In thinking of him," we are told by one who at that time observed him closely,* "I am reminded of the robust gaiety, *robustam alacritatem*, Father Sacchini speaks of somewhere, and which renders

* This witness was the *socius*, or assistant of the master of novices, and presided at some of the exercises of the novitiate.

its possessor capable of taking very powerful doses of penance and humiliation."

It was indeed so: the happiness of belonging unreservedly to God, the intoxication of the sacrifice, was the principle of that charming gaiety, of that uniform amiability, assisted, besides, by choice mental gifts and by the resources of a memory adorned with a great variety of knowledge. But whoever could have penetrated into his interior would soon have discovered that that joy, while being most genuine and unaffected, was not incompatible with suffering, and would have been led to admire still more that constant serenity by learning that Clerc bore in his heart an open and always bleeding wound, ever since the day his father had sworn to have nothing in common with him so long as he should see him remaining in the Society.

Clerc wrote to his father several times from the novitiate of Saint-Acheul; he never received a reply; it appears his letters were not read or even opened; the multiplied testimonies of his filial tenderness seemed to be scorned and set at naught. When he found that all his efforts at reconciliation were a dead loss, he wrote no more, and contented himself with praying and mourning in silence.

But now his silence is complained of. Still more, a communication is made to Father de Ravignan, who, persuaded that Clerc is in fault, and has undertaken to treat his father stiffly, writes to the father master that he highly dis-

approves of such a course, and that Alexis would do well to show himself more affectionate for the future.

When the contents of Father de Ravignan's letter were communicated to him, Clerc experienced a sudden joy, believing it all meant a revival of paternal tenderness. But the illusion was of short duration. A new letter of the novice addressed to Mr. Clerc had the same fate as the preceding ones. Not knowing what to think nor what to decide, Alexis finally had recourse to his brother for an explanation. In order not to aggravate the situation, he again takes rather a playful tone. What must he not have suffered when he received but another proof of the uselessness of his efforts and of the inflexibility of his father, who was still resolved to repel his advances and to refuse him the most ordinary marks of interest and sympathy?

"Here, now," he writes to his brother, May 6, 1855, "is an enigma which I propose to your sagacity. I am a subject of scandal in the Society. If this were because I am what I am, very imperfect and a bad example, there would be nothing wonderful in it, and you could have soon guessed that I am almost exactly the same that you have known me. But it is for quite another reason: I am a bad son; I never write to my father, and, behold, good souls say that the Jesuits destroy even filial love. Finally the story, through whom and how I know nothing at all, reaches Father de Ravignan; he writes to the reverend father master, and I am called on to explain myself—but I was

not clever enough for that. At last, I figure to myself that my prayers have worked a miracle, and that paternal tenderness read in secret the letters it did not open before the world. Immediately I write in my finest handwriting the letter whose sad fate you have related to me. So the poor little thing passed in its integrity into the wastepaper-basket, and I am again living in hopes.

"What is to be done? Is it credible, as Father de Ravignan writes, that our father complains of my silence when it is he who will not listen to me? And where can I discover the author of the tale? At all events, I tell you about it so as to explain my letter, and so that you may set the facts right if need be."

The matter was soon explained; it was not Mr. Clerc who had complained of the silence the novice of Saint-Acheul observed towards his family, but Alexis' sister-in-law, Madame Jules Clerc, and her remarks being heard by a friend of Alexis' childhood, Alexander (whom we have elsewhere called Mr. de S . . .), then officiously reported to Father de Ravignan, with whom Alexander was intimately acquainted, had produced that *imbroglio* to the innocent authors of which Clerc graciously granted a full amnesty.

"Well, it is you, little sister," he wrote when he had at last solved the enigma, "it is you who are the artisan of this letter business. If you had not had the simplicity to acknowledge it, I should never have guessed it. However, be assured I have not been vexed with anybody, and, on the con-

trary, as I believe I wrote Jules, I had for the time a great joy, imagining that my letters would give my father pleasure and that it would be in my power to be agreeable to him in something.

"The part of the affair which I admire most is the good faith of Alexander, who believes you quite simply without making any allowance for the little exaggerations sanctioned by custom, and then goes seriously to relate the story to Father de Ravignan, as if he could not just as well have written it to me himself. Perhaps you wanted to have me scolded? Very well! to punish your malice, let me inform you that I was not."

Always ready to pour out his heart to his brother Jules, Alexis did not weary of talking to him about the happiness of his vocation: "I will tell you that, for myself, time passes with incredible rapidity, and that it is only by consulting the almanac that I can believe it will soon be eleven months since I came to this house of benediction. O happy time! Would I ever have thought that I could become young again with the young? How can I ever be sufficiently thankful to God for the grace of so beautiful a vocation?"

Clerc, aged thirty-six years, was almost the dean of the novitiate; with the exception of two or three priests who were his seniors by a very little, all counted twelve, fifteen, or eighteen years less than he. His voyages added to his experience; he was a Nestor in that youthful world, but a Nestor who yielded to none in good humor and frank gaiety. A delightful conversationalist, they loved

to make him talk, and he was never at a loss for matter. As the fable says:

> "Quiconque a beaucoup vu
> Peut avoir beaucoup retenu."*

Who had seen more than he? He had seen the inside of things, had been an acute observer, and had forgotten nothing, for he was endowed with a most excellent memory. Such a one is a great resource in the recreations of a novitiate, where the world's noises do not penetrate and where the newspapers are not read. With him one could at will visit India, Oceanica, and better still, China. China! it was the Society itself, it was the family that one found there. In the mission Clerc had visited how many missionaries there were who had come from that same novitiate of Saint-Acheul, and in whose footsteps each novice was burning to walk! But in those conversations, which procured his brothers a very innocent amusement, Clerc feared there might be for him a hidden danger; his humility was alarmed at the *rôle*, modest as it was, which he had to assume when he thus contributed to the recreations his souvenirs of his sailor life.

He reflected upon it seriously during the retreat he made at the close of his first year of novitiate; he examined himself, and doubtless found matter for reform. He put the following resolutions in writing.

* Whoever has seen much has had the power of remembering much.

"Resolutions: To keep myself in the background; to keep my things and papers in order.

"Under the first head I see five points for particular examination:

"1. Not to be the first to speak of myself, and if it is not possible to avoid relating some story, to endeavor not to exhibit myself as an important actor, but rather to lose myself among the other personages.

"2. Not to draw others to talk about it and to make me talk about it.

"3. To gently give way for others to display their wit.

"4. To speak in a moderate tone and with few gestures, without trying too much to speak well and to pass for a lively and agreeable talker.

"5. To refrain from some witty sayings which would be very apropos."

More than once his thoughts turn to China, where he had witnessed such great examples of abnegation, and where it seems to him splendid opportunities for self-annihilation are offered to the missionary.

"Our Lord will teach me to endure the cold and the hardships of all kinds and not to complain. The Word is made a child, *infans—Deum infantem*. . . . Oh! that I might for thy sake, O Jesus, go there to stammer Chinese instead of the language I speak with so much vanity!

"Thou dost not let me feel, O Lord! the wound of the triple sword. There is a poverty that can be carried so far as to die of want, like Father

René Massa,* and there is a spiritual poverty of praises, honors. . . . Poverty is the renunciation of all exterior goods ; by it I offer everything to God.

" Chastity is the immolation of the body. I know well it cannot exist without that immolation. It is, among other definitions, the continual observance of the rules of modesty ; these are a prison for us, an impregnable fortress for a precious treasure.

" Obedience, it shall be that of the judgment, to the point where God has so lovingly put me to the test to practise it, and where I have so greatly failed.

" I desire all this coldly. O Jesus ! inspire me with the sentiments of thy Sacred Heart, that I may perfectly make a perfect offering."

And so as to truly feel *the wound of the triple sword,* as he expressed it, he asked, and to all appearances obtained permission to pronounce the three vows of devotion, the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, on the 9th of September, 1855, the feast of Blessed Peter Claver of the Society of Jesus.

When we see him thus reproaching himself so earnestly for being inclined to put himself forward in conversation, and for talking of his exploits and achievements, one is led to ask if this fault was really very prominent in him, and if it was a matter in which he had ample room for reform. An opportunity of gaining light on this point present-

* See in Chapter IX. the details of the death of Father René Massa, missionary of Kiang-nan. Clerc, who was then in Shanghai, had been among the first to hear them.

ed itself without any of our seeking, and we now know how much to believe of his self-accusations. At Saint-Acheul Clerc made his *kitchen experiment* under a brother cook who is still living, and of whom we ourselves have an excellent recollection. To explain to the profane a language they are unfamiliar with, we will state quite simply that Clerc, like all the other novices, was for an entire month assistant cook, and as such occupied from morning to night under the orders of the head cook, leading meanwhile the life of the lay brothers. Questioning about the dear and venerated novice the first witnesses of his religious life, of whom the number has singularly decreased since 1855, we naturally addressed ourselves to this brother cook, and to refresh his memory we said to him : "It wasn't every day that you had lieutenants subject to your orders ?"

Would the reader ever guess the good brother's reply ? We will content ourselves with repeating : "What I remember about Father Clerc is having seen him make indelible ink for marking the linen and show the wardrobe-keeper how to use it, and all with the best grace in the world and without any pretension. His care to be unnoticed was precisely what most astonished me when, long after he had left Saint-Acheul, I learned what he had been in the world ; to the best of my recollection not a single word about navigation escaped him."

Thus, for an entire month, living with those good brothers, spending with them the hours of recreation, when, through a very natural deference

they left the honors of the conversation to him, he was sufficiently master of himself to refrain from the least expression which might cause his companions to suspect what he had been in the world ; and, if he had to speak of the China mission sometimes, as is likely enough, nothing betrayed that he had seen with his own eyes what he related, nor that he had ever worn the epaulet of an officer of the navy.

Now we are, thank God, sufficiently enlightened regarding his foolish vanity, and his incurable desire to be noticed.

CHAPTER XI.

VAUGIRARD—THE SCHOOL SAINTE GENEVIEVE—LAVAL.

We may believe that after such a novitiate Clerc had laid the foundations of a solid and perfected virtue. The Society had not completed its work of forming him, but it could begin to require some services of him. At the commencement of the scholastic year 1855–1856 he was sent to the College of the Immaculate Conception at Vaugirard to perform the duties of surveillant, at the same time that he prepared himself by following a complemental course to undergo an examination in all the branches of philosophy.

It was his apprenticeship to his college life, his *début* in the great work of education to which he was to consecrate eight more years. Of the fourteen years of life that remained to him, he passed nine in the colleges; add to these four years of theology (1861–1865), and that second novitiate of a year which we call the third probation (1869), you will have the epitome of his religious life, and you can count all the marches of the obscure and laborious route by which he ascended to the height of his heroic and glorious sacrifice.

That great art of effacing himself, which he had

learned in the novitiate, and of which he was already an accomplished master, did not abandon him during all those years; and although it in nowise encroached upon the originality of his character, still it is easy to understand that the task of the biographer whose hero hides himself as much as possible is singularly simplified.

Let not the reader be alarmed; we shall invent nothing to make up for our penury, and the laconism it imposes upon us is of itself eloquent enough to prevent us from having any desire to remedy it. In addition, the interior fire with which we have seen him burning during his retreats bursts out on certain occasions and casts a bright light here and there. This is amply sufficient to complete our information on a subject wherein there is no question of satisfying a vain curiosity, but of responding to the pious interest that attaches to the intimate knowledge of a beautiful and holy soul.

A venerable religious, who was Clerc's spiritual guide and the depositary of the secrets of his conscience during the single year he passed at the College of Vaugirard, furnishes us this portrait from life which reproduces especially the interior physiognomy of our beloved brother: "Father Alexis Clerc was beloved by God and men. God was to him a tender and merciful Father, a kind and devoted Friend. He had no other ideas of his God. Therefore his prayers were usually a filial conversation with him, a pouring out of love and gratitude. His happiness in loving our Lord and

being loved by him was reflected on his countenance and gave him an expression of sweet and calm joy. Thence, also—that is, from his relations with God—sprang his charity and zeal for men. His whole life, like that of his Divine Master, was spent in doing good. To sacrifice himself, to render service to others, to teach his pupils, to console the unhappy, to convert sinners, to awaken repentance in their hearts and give them peace of conscience—these were his delights. All who came in contact with him felt at their ease, and their hearts dilated ; they loved him because he himself loved much, for an ardent love of God had added a new warmth to the natural kindness of his heart and the frank loyalty of his character."

This portrait seems to us perfectly truthful, particularly where it depicts that powerful attraction Clerc exercised over souls, that gift of winning love by loving much himself, and all for the greater spiritual good of his neighbor and the greater glory of God, which he never lost sight of. We can testify that it is he exactly, just such as we knew him, such as he lingers in the memory of those who had the happiness of living with him.

Of course Clerc was not allowed to continue in his college life all the mortifications he had imposed upon himself in the novitiate ; he had to give up, among others, sleeping upon a board, and he was directed to be more saving of his strength, which he would need for the studies he must pursue on his own account, and for the humble duties with which he was charged among the pupils. He

compensated for this by other victories over himself, and always treated rudely enough, cavalierly enough, if I may dare so to speak, his poor body which he had for a long while held in slavery.

His residence at Vaugirard brought him nearer to his family, and he saw the dearest of his wishes realized in the watchful and devoted affection that surrounded his father's old age. Yet even in this, doubtless joy was not always unmixed. According to a beautiful thought of St. Chrysostom, God is pleased to mingle blessings and ills in the lives of the just, and thus he forms a woof of admirable variety. *

While Clerc was at Saint-Acheul a son had been born to his brother Jules and named Alexis after his uncle, and the brightest hopes were already founded upon the little creature. But God had only lent the babe. He took it back, scarcely allowing him whose name it would have perpetuated in the family time to smile upon it once or twice. Uncle Alexis, who fortunately had Christian hearts to deal with, hastened to dry the tears that flowed for the loss of that dear first-born. "My dear and good Jules," he wrote, "I know how deep is a father's affection, and I sympathize with the great sorrow you feel for the loss of that beautiful child. Parents do not measure their love by the qualities of their children; still the loss of those that are the most promising is more to be regretted. I was able to judge myself that Alexis promised a great deal.

* Tum de adversis, tum ex prosperis, justorum vitam quasi admirabili varietate contexit.

"Faith, which does not permit us to doubt of the sovereign and eternal happiness already possessed by that dear little soul, is the only motive of consolation I can offer to its parents. May your hearts find therein, if not full consolation, at least some alleviation."

Who would not have thought that Mr. Clerc, pleased at having his son so near him, would have reconciled himself to a vocation which did not make it necessary for them to be separated? If Alexis had been captain of a frigate, he would probably have spent the years he passed at Vaugirard or Paris in sailing over the seas, in visiting anew Africa, China, or Oceanica, and who knows if he would ever have seen his father again? But no! the father could not be persuaded to see the son a Jesuit, and, cruel to himself, he went so far as to refuse, when it was offered him, the solace of the son's presence. A letter from Alexis to his brother reveals this painful situation to us. He wrote from Vaugirard December 29, 1856: "My good Jules, will you ask our father if he will allow me to embrace him on New Year's day, and, in case he consents, let me know the hour when it will be most convenient to you to have me call? Also, in case my request should not be granted, do not neglect to inform me how you purpose spending that day, so that if possible I may pay you my humble respects as younger brother. . . ."

Let us anticipate some years, so as to drain this chalice to the dregs.

Ordained priest in the course of September,

1859, Father Clerc was to celebrate his first Mass on the 26th of that month in the public chapel of the School Sainte-Genevieve. He wrote his father a letter dictated by the liveliest faith, but at the same time glowing with his filial tenderness:

"I beg you most earnestly, my dear father, not to be absent, so that you may all be united at the foot of the altar where I shall have the incomprehensible honor of offering to God omnipotent his only Son, like himself God omnipotent, an oblation infinitely pleasing to the Father and the source of all the graces he bestows upon men ; the honor of immolating the Victim that satisfies for the sins of the world, of renewing the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary. He it is who is the reconciliation of God with sinners. There is no debt, no offence which God does not remit to him who presents as satisfaction and reparation the blood of Jesus Christ, who has made himself our bondsman. Can you turn away your eyes from the proof of this which he offers you—a proof so well suited to touch your heart, since it is in your son that he causes the munificence of his pardons to be displayed ? Will you not see the signal honor to which he raises me ? After having drawn me from the shame and abasement of sin, he places me among the princes of his people. God is more jealous, more proud of his mercy than of his other attributes ; he wants to show you how he proportions his graces to our needs.

"Come and adore our Lord Jesus Christ reposing in my hands; the good Jesus, after having ex-

hausted his blood in suffering for us, could only satisfy his love by giving himself to us, in a manner as perfect as it is wonderful, in the Holy Eucharist.

"Come, my dear father, and receive the first blessing from my hands; come and witness the grandeur, the majesty of the religion that without humiliating the father enables the son to bless him.

"It is to me a need and a duty of gratitude and love to invite you to these heavenly joys, and to communicate to you the first fruits of the graces and benedictions God wills to shed abroad by my hands. May you one day be filled with them!

"I conjure you yet once more, my dear father, to give to this august and solemn festival the completion, necessary to my heart, of your presence."

Undoubtedly Mr. Clerc was moved while reading these words, full of an emotion proceeding from the innermost depths of a soul that had not ceased to be dear to him. Nevertheless he stood firm and resisted the inspirations of his own heart. He did not attend the first Mass of his son.

Clerc was no longer in Paris, but in our house of Laval, pursuing his theology, when his father died, December 30, 1863. The old man, who sank insensibly, without, however, having in anything altered his habits, had expired without any crisis, without any agony, with none of his children near him, and in a way so unexpected that no priest assisted at his last hour. Alexis' grief was mute; it was long since the measure of it had been full,

and his soul had not dared to hope. He could not prevent himself from reflecting painfully upon the causes, unfortunately too common, which had kept the eyes of his worthy father closed to the light of Christianity. Later, doubtless, what he learned from the lips of his brother tempered the cruel bitterness of his first regrets. Mr. Clerc had only apparently persevered in his insensibility to the truths of faith; with time and under the influence of pious family examples that haughty courage had weakened, and towards his last days he prayed; they heard him reciting earnestly and in impressive tones, dwelling upon each petition, the Lord's Prayer. How can we believe that grace, without which it is impossible to invoke the Lord Jesus, was a stranger to those sentiments bordering so closely on the avowal and repentance that call for pardon?

On the occasion of a still more sudden and far otherwise alarming death,* had not Father de Ravignan said: "We are unable to penetrate the secrets of divine mercy; we can neither know nor affirm what passes in the last moments of a cruel and mysterious agony; but Christians, living under the law of hope no less than under that of faith and love, we ought constantly to rise from the depths of our griefs to the thought of the infinite goodness of the Saviour. Here below there is no limit, no impossibility between grace and the

* That of the Duke of Orleans, the eldest son of King Louis Philippe. See the "Life of Father de Ravignan," by Father A. de Ponlevoy, Paris, 1860, vol. i. p. 244.

soul so long as there remains a breath of life. . . . We shall one day become acquainted with those ineffable wonders of divine mercy; we must never cease to implore it with profound confidence.'

Clerc must have found motives of consolation and hope in these words of his holy friend. We have others, we who now know what God reserved for him himself. Before the tribunal of that great God, to whom all things are eternally present, and who considers what is not yet as though it were, the blood of the son already cried for mercy for the father.

On the 1st of January of the following year, after having offered the Holy Sacrifice for the soul of his poor father, Alexis, addressing his New Year's wishes to his brother and sister-in-law, expressed his deep gratitude to them for the affectionate care they had lavished on the old man in his last days, and for the sacrifices they had had to make to his humor, his tastes, and still more to his opinions. "May God reward," he said, in speaking of his sister-in-law, "the extreme gentleness she has not ceased to show since she entered our family! I believe that her children, the source of so sweet a happiness, are the sure token that God has accepted so many concessions made to the love of peace. Ah! well, then,

'Princesse, en qui le Ciel mit un esprit si doux,'*

raise those dear little treasures, 'a sweet and

* Princess to whom Heaven has given so sweet a soul.

frail hope,' in the love of Jesus Christ and of the Blessed Virgin. If we had not, your husband and I, learned the truths of faith at the knees of a woman who was also very gentle and very Christian, after years of forgetfulness, the grace of God might perhaps have knocked in vain at the door of our hearts, and you would not to-day have near yours that upright, loyal, pure, strong heart which you know how to understand and love."

Let us now retrace our steps. We have not been willing to separate these pages that show us in Alexis the good son and the good brother; but they are posterior in date to the point where we left his biography—that is, to the scholastic year 1856–1857, which he spent entirely at the College of Vaugirard.

The following year, appointed professor of mathematics in the School Sainte-Genevieve, he entered upon that course of teaching which was to occupy, almost exclusively and to the end, his active years. Naturally his place was there; his previous studies as well as his mental gifts, his quality of old pupil of the Polytechnic School, his title of licentiate of the mathematical sciences, all recommended him for that employment, and by assigning him another our superiors would have seemed to poorly justify the reputation they have of putting each man at the post that suits him best, and which he is best fitted to occupy.

It is true they might have first sent him to study his theology, so that having to follow a four years' course he could have passed his last examinations

at the age of about forty-one—a rather mature age, and one that it was a little unusual to see on the benches. But the School Sainte-Genevieve, newly established, needed professors, and it is self-evident that in those beginnings there was no great variety of choice. Several of the persons who would have succeeded there required preparation; Clerc was already prepared and ready to take; they took him without asking him if another destination would not be more agreeable. Others besides him made the same sacrifice, and made it joyfully. It is the honor and strength of our Institute that in such cases individual interests retire before the superior interest of the glory of God.

When that preparatory school, which is now flourishing and even celebrated, was seen to open very modestly in our house of the Rue Lhomond (formerly Rue des Postes), there were not wanting people to warn us that certain failure awaited us. These people added that if we had succeeded in our colleges in making bachelors of letters, we would perhaps be less fortunate in teaching the sciences, and that in any case the struggle would be a sharp one. Truly, the enterprise was bold and somewhat hazardous. The similar establishments with which we would have to compete had in their favor (some of them at least) a half century of existence and success, reputation, acquired experience, wealth, and a numerous corps of teachers perfectly trained, while we had nothing of the sort. However, those obstacles were surmounted, and we even did not have to wait long for success.

By what means did the new-comers achieve so respectable a place beside their formidable competitors? By self-devotion—a self-devotion such as all human motives combined could not inspire. To sacrifice their time and tastes, their health, their strength, and the vigor of their youth, without possible compensation in this world—this is what religious have been able to do by the grace of their vocation, what God has blessed, and to-day we behold its fruits. We do not refer only to the results of the examinations, to the pupils admitted to the Polytechnic School, Saint-Cyr, the Naval, Central, Agricultural Schools, etc.; they may now be counted by hundreds and thousands; they fill the armies of sea and land, not to mention the civil careers where they do not take the lowest rank. But the bloody battles of our late wars proved that they possessed merits far more precious to their country than professional knowledge and high mental culture. A hundred of those noble young men slain by the enemy, and fallen with their arms in their hands, are the worthy crown of masters who also knew how to shed their blood for a cause not less beautiful, or rather for the same cause, masters and pupils having but one cry and one device: God and the country! †

There, at Sainte-Genevieve, Clerc met among his new colleagues Father Léon Ducondray, then a simple surveillant, who later became his superior,

† See "Souvenirs of the School Sainte-Genevieve. Notices of the pupils slain by the enemy." By the Rev. Father Chauveau, S.J. 3 vols. in 18.

and of whom he was the companion in death. How suited they were to one another! With an ardor more restrained and less readily enkindled, there was in Father Ducondray the same abnegation, the same active and joyous generosity, the same devotedness to the common cause. His vocation, less extraordinary in certain aspects, had nevertheless cost him more than one sacrifice. A doctor of laws, of high birth, possessor of a handsome fortune, endowed with noble faculties enhanced by the perfect elegance of his person and manners, he might have aspired to the most distinguished position in the world and in the higher walks of public life where he would naturally have entered. He preferred to live poor and unknown for the love of Jesus Christ, and at the age of twenty-five he left all—his brilliant future and an admirable mother justly proud of such a son—to enter the Society of Jesus. The superiors were not slow in discovering his merit, but they made no haste to put him on a pinnacle. After two years of novitiate, after another year consecrated to the study of philosophy and the preparation for an examination, they assigned him the humble but important duties of a surveillant, too like those which God confides to his angels for a true religious to despise them. In his discharge of them he displayed a rare maturity and a remarkable clear-sightedness. "He was," some one who knew him well has said, "a surveillant of imposing presence." I can well believe it. As he walked in the presence of God he possessed his

soul in peace, and a certain calm dignity never forsook him. Therefore nobody was astonished when, still young, his theology being completed, he was named rector. He was in every respect equal to his position, and, having to face uncommon difficulties that would have disconcerted a less valiant soul, he triumphed over them by his sublime abnegation and the greatness of his faith. Clerc also knew at the School Sainte-Genevieve Father Caubert, who, on the fatal May 26, 1871, accompanied Father Olivaint and Father de Bengy to the last combat, and fell with them under the shooting of the Rue Haxo. To-day one same tomb reunites them all, and together they repose gloriously at the foot of the Altar of the Martyrs.

Thus we see how the future martyr of La Roquette found himself in his element in the company of souls of the same metal, the same quality as his own ; and he proved to himself that he was not deceived when, fleeing from the world and dreading the contagion of its vices, he said on the day of his election : "The common life in a religious community carries you, almost without your being aware of it, to the opposite virtues, and by good example encourages you to all the others."

The eight years he passed at the School Sainte-Genevieve may be summed up in two words : he effaced himself more and more and he devoted himself without reserve. Before as well as after his theology charged with a class of the second or third grade, he did not shine more than others

whose knowledge was not nearly so extensive nor so profound. One of his superiors, like him a pupil of the Polytechnic School, considered his course *almost too learned.* From the entirely practical point of view of the preparation for the examinations, this is not an encomium. It may be that his essentially quick and intuitive mind had some difficulty in regulating its steps so as to render it easy for all to follow. He made up for this fault by an unvarying kindness of manner that set his pupils perfectly at their ease, and allowed them to ask of him, in season and out of season, all the explanations they wanted. Some lines from his hand show us in what a truly supernatural spirit, with what detachment from self and humble acquiescence in the will of God, he accepted in its plenitude, however repugnant to nature and however ungrateful it might be, the task obedience imposed upon him in the rather varied duties he had to perform at Sainte-Genevieve's:

"The employment I received with indifference seems to me the most desirable in the house:

"Teaching the sciences useful to the temporal career of the children.

"Teaching the truths of religion, and finally teaching virtue.

"For the first and second points I need to labor; for the third, to be closely united with Jesus Christ—I shall strive for this, and I shall explain the life of our Lord to the sodality.

"My instructions will be less didactic, more conversational.

"With regard to extra duties, I wish to be like the old man's stick."

Thus Father Clerc, then a priest, was that year: 1, professor of mathematics (teaching the sciences useful to the temporal career of the children); 2, charged with a catechism class (teaching the truths of religion); 3, director of a sodality, and that was principally where he had *to teach virtue.* Besides all this, he was called upon for certain *corvées,* or extra duties, which did not fall under any of these three heads, and of which the complete enumeration is impossible, since they were composed especially of accidental and unforeseen requirements. To take the pupils to walk, not always, be it well understood, in the finest of weather; on the days of dismissal to accompany them to the railroad depots; on the opening days to survey the parlors, courts and corridors, etc., etc.—all that has nothing to do with teaching mathematics, and it is not to the honorable professors of our lyceums that we need address ourselves for the performance of such work. They intrench themselves in their classes, as is their right: *suum cuique.* Only would to God that this surveillance of every moment wherein the good deportment and the morality of the pupils are concerned to the highest degree, were not abandoned to subordinates destitute of authority as well as of personal dignity, and incapable of inspiring youth with the respect they do not always have for themselves! This, it must be admitted, is one of the plague-spots in laic education, and it is vain to seek a re-

medy outside of the sentiments faith plants in the heart of the religious and the priest. With zeal for souls and with religious obedience, all becomes easy, and that which everywhere else is esteemed petty and contemptible is ennobled by the loftiness of the object and the grandeur of the result. Ah! there is no doubt but that, humanly speaking, it is a pretty disagreeable business to conduct a squad of youth on a promenade, especially through the streets and boulevards of Paris, where there are unfortunate contacts and splashes of more than one sort to be dreaded for them. But one does not become a religious, and in particular a Jesuit, to have a good time, and if a man has the holy passion of glorifying God and saving souls by mortifying himself, he will find therein the means with all the chances in the world of escaping the assaults of vain glory and the surprises of self-love. If it costs a little—and it will sometimes cost a good deal to nature—at least it is not trouble wasted and the result is sure in the long run. In spite of the levity of their age, the young understand by instinct that if a man of merit, after so many other sacrifices, gives up for their sake his rest and his ease, it is because he expects much of them, and, touched by such devotedness, they labor to render themselves worthy of it. It is for them the seed of better sentiments, and certain ones of them will tell you that thus they were won, without exactly knowing how, to duty and virtue. Never from the height of his chair, where, however, he gave proof of science, talent, and zeal, did the most accom-

plished professor gain such an influence over them. But they saw that same professor descend to their level, enter, so to speak, into their everyday school life, perhaps join in their games, wear himself out from morning to night in making himself all to all. There is no more to be said ; they know with what a true and sure friend they have to deal, and it will be very difficult for them to resist his entreaties when he shall ask as his only reward that they perform their duty conscientiously, that they think in sober earnest of becoming not only honest men, but good men, true and solid Christians.

Behold how great is the importance of those humble and fatiguing *corvées* in a house of Christi n education ! St. Ignatius says that the obedient religious is like a stick in an old man's hand. Father Clerc, making the most meritorious application of this to himself, desires to be *like a stick for the corvées.* Those who saw him at the work say that he acquitted himself of it with the best grace in the world. Therefore he was universally beloved and respected by his pupils.

If he thus devoted himself with his whole heart to what related only to exterior discipline, what was he in his catechism class, in his sodality, where he taught not mathematics but virtue and religion ?

His sodality was composed of future pupils of the Polytechnic School ; they were the head, the *élite* of the School Sainte-Genevieve, and as in general they joined the distinction of talent to the authority of virtue and character, their example was

very powerful in the house, and it depended upon them in some sort to lead the rest of their companions in the good path. Father Clerc applied himself to strengthening their faith, to arming it against the dangers that would soon assail it, to inspiring them with a sincere, manly, and generous virtue, a tender devotion towards Jesus Christ and his holy Mother, and to putting under the care of the Virgin Immaculate all the treasures the purity of a heart of twenty years promises to mature age. His sodalists venerated him as a saint, and loved him as the best of fathers. "He gave all his heart to his sodality," said the Rev. Father de Ponlevoy, who, visiting the School Sainte-Genevieve in the capacity of Provincial, was particularly watchful of all that belonged to the service of God, and could not be indifferent to a spectacle so consoling to his faith. "I was present at the reunions several times," he added, "to preside over them. It is impossible to describe the joy that reflected from Father Clerc's person when he was in the midst of all his children."

His children—that is the right word, and what we shall see of the affectionate relations that were formed between them and him, and continued always intimate and confiding long after their entrance in the world, will show how deep was his influence on the hearts that had once been touched by the flame of his charity and zeal.

Let us now say a few words about the four years Father Clerc consecrated to the study of dogmatic theology (1861–1865), and which he

passed at the scholasticate of Laval, where he is affectionately remembered.

At the age of forty-one he once more took his place on the benches, and this, we may believe, most cheerfully, happy to obey his superiors, and happy beyond all expression to find his St. Thomas again and to hold long and studious conversations with him. I say St. Thomas? It was the whole school that came to visit him, and he welcomed them most gladly. Now Suarez, and now Toletus or Fonseca—his note-books show this—in turn occupied his learned leisure, and he abandoned himself without constraint to the inclination he had always felt for scholasticism. We must note this as a feature of his character, and it is not the least attractive. He had in everything a horror, if I may dare so to speak, of the *quod justum*, and he inclined to all that he judged not only useful with a practical and immediate utility, but with a nobly supererogatory one; and as he had put a certain luxury in his use of corporal mortifications, he put it likewise in his studies, always following that generous impetus which we have remarked in him from the first of his novitiate, persuaded that there should be nothing mediocre in the service of God.

Study was not his sole occupation. He was a priest; he exercised either in Laval or in the neighboring towns some of the functions of the evangelical ministry, and even gave missions in the country districts. But it was especially to the laboring youth of the city that he consecrated the first fruits of his zeal, and here is what has been

written to us on this subject by a friend who, happening to be in Laval, was kind enough to question in our interest the still vivid recollections preserved there, and to send us the facts he gathered from the surest sources :

" The members of the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul still gladly remember Father Clerc's first efforts as catechist of the apprentices. His instructions were solid and perfectly adapted to his auditory ; he knew especially how to captivate them by interesting narrations. Consequently the young men loved to hear him, and several have since declared that they found a powerful help in his advice.

" Another still more important work assigned him by his superiors did not permit him to continue his catechism classes. I refer to the Œuvre de Beauregard. To withdraw young persons from the dangerous pleasures of the city by furnishing them with innocent amusements—such was the idea which presided at the foundation of that charitable institution. On Sundays and holydays the young workmen are assembled in a house pleasantly situated. There they attend Mass and Vespers, rest among joyous companions from the labors of the week, and in the evening return to their families. They are generally remarked for their peaceful habits and their industry. How different from those poor workmen who exhaust their strength in debauchery, and wearily resume their interrupted labor !

" Father Clerc was not slow in making himself

beloved by all—by the president and the young men. He took part in all their games, so as to animate them by his example. His skill was proverbial. He challenged the strongest, and often allowed himself to be beaten, so as to give his antagonists the honor and pleasure of victory. When inclement weather prevented the noisy band from enjoying its sport in the field, Father Clerc was the centre around which it gathered; and then began a story of palpitating interest, an interminable story, with a plot that grew more or less complicated according to the duration of the bad weather. All listened with the greatest attention, and even frequently, notwithstanding the return of clear skies, the narrator yielded to the gentle violence that was done him, and brought the tale to a happy *dénouement.*

"If there was question of an administrative measure, his advice was generally adopted as the best. Was it necessary to employ severity against an unruly spirit, Father Clerc interceded for the culprit: his heart was so merciful! Did a boy deserve to be expelled, the father was only with difficulty induced to consent; he wanted them to wait, for to his way of thinking it was a soul the more that would be lost."

We know, besides, and from an equally sure source, that the zeal he expended in this work—in the pursuit of souls—frequently had the sweetest and most consoling results. His amiable playfulness had gained him all hearts, but his influence was especially great over such of those young per-

sons as were approaching a maturer age, and some of them, docile to his counsels, made remarkable progress in virtue. One among them at the age of twenty-six commenced his classical studies so as to enter holy orders. What was not Father Clerc's ardor in seconding his design? What measures he took, what fatigue he endured! He did not rest until he had procured for the young man, as far as was in his power, the necessary assistance for pursuing his studies and supplying the place of his daily earnings.

So it was that within the limits of what was possible, and without allowing his zeal for theology to be cooled, Father Clerc during his stay at Laval spent his happiest leisure hours in the practice of that ingenious and active charity with the secrets of which he had long been acquainted, and which had caused it to be said of him at Indret, while he was still an officer of the navy, that he alone was worth a whole Conference of St. Vincent de Paul.

And now, in concluding this chapter, one of the shortest of this biography wherein we have chiefly at heart exact veracity, may we be permitted a reflection?

Here, then, gathered into a very few pages, is all of interest we have been able to glean concerning that considerable portion of the religious life of our beloved brother comprised between the end of his novitiate and the beginning of his third probation—that is to say, in thirteen full years, of which he passed one at Vaugirard, eight at the School Sainte-Genevieve, and the other four at Laval.

Assuredly, from a merely human point of view, it is very little and unimportant, and, even so, we may perhaps be reproached for having, in our brevity, insisted too much upon certain details. Still, the author of the "Imitation" tells us in fitting words: "It is no small matter to dwell in monasteries or in a congregation, and to live with our brethren without reproach, and to persevere faithfully until death." * But when the death which crowns so holy a life is that of a martyr, what think you of it? Was it not worth the while to enquire about the hidden or but slightly-shining merits to which God in his wisdom reserved the incomparable honor of that supreme victory?

This is why, having to unroll those thirteen years of religious life, where day succeeds day without changing the routine of occupations or varying the employment of the hours, we have not deemed that we ought, for the sake of pleasing the worldly, to omit incidents small and vulgar in appearance, but wherein a practised eye will discern by the light of faith the grand characters of a virtue proof to the rudest combats and equal to all sacrifices.

*Non est parvum in monasteriis vel in congregatione habitare, et ibi sine querela conversari, et usque ad mortem fidelis perseverare ("Imit.," l. i. cap. xvii.)

CHAPTER XII.

FATHER CLERC AND HIS PUPILS.

¶ We have not said all there is to be said about the professorship of Father Clerc. We must look at its fruits. "By their fruits you shall know them" (Matt. vii. 16). There was something very beautiful about his relations with his pupils. A devoted professor, devoured with the wish of being useful to those committed to his charge, he loved and he was loved; he gave himself to them, and they gave themselves to him as youth knows how to give, without bargaining and without dreaming of taking back the gift. This is what we learn from numerous letters he carefully preserved in his private archives as so many souvenirs of an ever precious past. Was it not very allowable for him, in the evenings of his laborious and full days, to rest himself in the shade of those young and fresh friendships, and to breathe the perfume that exhaled from the hearts of his dear pupils?

We have breathed it after him, and we are embalmed with it. Perfect stranger as we were to the circumstances mentioned in these letters whose writers were unknown to us, we have not been able to escape a sympathetic emotion while penetrating

much further than we had hoped to, into the inner life of that class that was Father Clerc's delight and that had so great a resemblance to a closely-united family.

We do not think we are indiscreet in unfolding some of the pages of this correspondence, whose gravest confidences need have no fear of revelation. They are flowers gathered in Father Clerc's garden and of which we would weave him a crown. His old pupils will not be displeased that the world should learn that if he was all tenderness towards them, he had not, thank God! ingrates to deal with.

It was in October, 1861, the time of the reopening of the school; Father Clerc had the preceding year been the professor of the *cours des marins* (a course preparatory to the Naval School), boys of about fifteen years of age and the youngest of all in the School Sainte-Genevieve.* They are no sooner arrived than they are eager to throw themselves into the arms of their excellent master. But, alas! his room is empty, and they are told that he has been gone from the house some weeks; he is now at Laval, where he will spend several years. What a bitter deception for them! What regrets! what complaints! One would have supposed they were victims of treason, and that a base advantage had been taken of their absence. How was it that the father-provincial, the author of this change, had not consulted them? Then, the

* This section has since been transferred to Brest in the immediate neighborhood of the school-ship.

first emotion passed, they reflect that there is still some communication possible between Paris and Laval, and each boy takes up his pen to write to his old master. If I may judge by the samples I have before me, the postal service had a great deal to do about the end of that particular October.

"My kind and dear father," this one writes, "I do not mean that the others shall write to you and your little *gars* [he is a Breton] not, and that you should think he only remembers those who are present. I earnestly assure you I shall all my life remember your kindness to me. I was very sorry to leave Paris without being able to say good-by to you; if Father P——, who took me to the depot, had not prevented me from going to your room, I should not have left so," etc., etc.

All use nearly the same language, but each considers himself as under special obligations. "Reverend Father," says another, who believes himself behindhand, "it is very shameful for me to be the last to write to you, you who showed me so much kindness last year, although sometimes you did look cross at me, and dry bread alone, or with prunes, made me remember that there must be no talking during recitation. But all that, I know very well, was to make me work and gain as much as possible for the next year. It was only with deep astonishment mixed with regret that I learned of your departure; for, after all our acquaintance with one another, I would much rather have you than Father N——, whom I did not know," etc.

Meanwhile, let us remark, the pupils soon grew accustomed to the new professor, and they congratulated themselves on the solidity and clearness of his manner of teaching, and none of them thought of paying court to Father Clerc by telling him that he was not well replaced.

Here is another correspondent, who mingles a little malice with his expressions of regret:

"I have no need to tell you all the sorrow I experienced when I learned that you had left us. It is unfortunate for us, the sailors; but I think, however, that you ought not to be sorry, not for having left us, but for having left the business of professor, which, according to report (I cannot speak from experience), is not the most interesting, especially when one has many mediocre pupils."

The compliment is not of the most flattering to Messrs. the *sailors*, but the observation in its generality does not lack justice.

Was Father Clerc, then, for ever lost to them? No; in accordance with the custom of the house, they might hope to see him at the time of the semi-annual examinations, when he would come to share the labors of his former colleagues. Besides, Laval was on the road to Brest, on the road to the school-ship, and, once appointed naval cadets, his pupils on repairing to their post had a fine opportunity of stopping to call on him.

"Reverend Father," writes one of those fortunate competitors who had just read his name in the official list, "you must know the result of the examinations; so my letter is to reply to your kind

invitation. We are to start September 28, by the morning train that reaches Laval at 2.13. It will be a great pleasure for me to see you, but I would not like you to incommode yourself on my account if you are occupied." The same boy will soon write from the school-ship and give news of his companions, adding the names and qualities of the ship's officers, the most of whom are old comrades of Father Clerc.

One of those who felt most keenly the unexpected departure that caused so much regret was a new-comer, until then a pupil of Vaugirard, who consequently knew the father only by reputation, but who had begun to rejoice several months before at the prospect of preparing for the Naval School under his guidance. Courageously employing a part of his vacation in bringing himself up to the level of the course he was to follow, he submits to his future professor his daily regulation, in which work was wisely combined with the rest and amusements of the season; and after having given this unequivocal proof of his good will, he concludes by saying: "This letter, Reverend Father, is doubtless very dull, very cold, and very insignificant in itself; it is not the style of a student of humanities; but, at least, be persuaded of the respect and devotedness (since he has not yet been able to learn to know you, that is, to love you) of your grateful and loving son." This appears like a slight contradiction in terms; but we see that the boy's heart got the start of him, so sure he was of the sort of man he was writing to, and so certainly

did he recognize in advance the father in the future professor.

Being arrived at the School Sainte-Genevieve too late to become his pupil, he does not deem himself released from obligations towards Father Clerc, and he writes to him again: "Reverend Father, probably you have not expected to receive a note from me. Still, I have believed it my duty to thank you for the favors you have done me, and hearing all my fellow-pupils extol your kindness to them makes me want to tell you how I have profited by that you have shown me." Here follows an account of his vacation work, in which he faithfully observed Father Clerc's instructions. But the poor child cannot say enough about the kindness of the father, and, dwelling on what his new companions have told him, he adds ingenuously: "H—— has spoken to me about you in a way that has given me a great deal of pleasure, for I have understood that both times I saw you I was not deceived, and that you are truly a very good father." He who wrote these lines died at twenty-three years of age, an ensign of the navy. Fallen in the very first of the career which smiled upon his youthful ambition, but doubtless preserved by that premature end from the corruption of the world, the little we know of him attaches us to his memory, and makes us love him as he himself loved the excellent master he had had but a glimpse of.

This is enough to show us that the affection with which Father Clerc inspired his pupils was intimate, deep, serious, and—need we say it?—Chris-

tian before all else. When days of trial come these young men will know where to seek consolation, and they will find it quite natural to confide to him not only the little disappointments of their school life, but also the cruel misfortunes that overthrow their plans for the future, and the still more irreparable losses that plunge their families into mourning.

Here is a letter which we copy with real pleasure, being unable to doubt that he who wrote it was the worthy pupil of such a master :

"SCHOOL SAINTE-GENEVIEVE,
Tuesday, October 25, 1861.

"REVEREND AND VERY DEAR FATHER: I beg your pardon for troubling you, but a very powerful motive prompts me to write. All our family, and especially my beloved father, has just met with a cruel affliction. My grandfather, my father's father, has died suddenly, without having had time to make any preparation for that terrible change. This dear grandfather died last Monday, October 17, we do not know at what hour, for the servant, on entering his room in the morning, found him inanimate and stretched on the floor. The day before he had been as gay, in as good spirits, as usual; he had received a visit of two hours, had played a game of billiards, and had sat up till ten o'clock in the evening laughing and playing cards. Alas! he did not think of the great misfortune that was going to befall us. It is to be believed that he had not a moment of agony, and that he was not conscious when he died;

for after his death, when he had been replaced on his bed, those who had the happiness of seeing him have told me that he looked like a handsome old man asleep. His face was calm, and his features not altered in the least; he must have risen to get something in his room, and then have fallen on the floor by a sudden stroke of apoplexy. Such a death was very dreadful and cruel to him as well as to his children. Papa had seen him only a fortnight before, and it was a month since my aunt had last seen him; as for my uncle, he was with my grandfather, but he had no more consolation than the rest of us, since, after having left his father well the evening before, he next saw him lifeless and without having had a word of consolation or farewell from his lips. It is also very terrible and very cruel for me, for I cannot tell you how fond I was of that beloved grandfather; however, in the midst of all this grief, we have some cause for consolation, and we hope in the mercy of God. Fortunately, my grandfather was a very practical Christian from the age of seventy-two, the age when he made his First Communion. From that time he went regularly to confession and communion, and he has always been surrounded by poor families who owed their happiness and comfort to him. All this leads us to hope that God has called him to himself to reward him for his useful and honorable life. This death, although very fearful, is perhaps another mercy of God, who wished to spare my dear grandfather the sufferings and agony of death which he feared so

much. We confidently hope and we also pray very earnestly for rest for his soul. I will ask you, then, my very dear father, to be so kind as to say a Mass for him, and not to forget him in your daily prayers. We recommend him most especially to you, whose prayers are so powerful with God. Your well-beloved child, R. P. L."

It is unnecessary to enlarge upon the sentiments that dictated this letter, signed with one of the most respected names of the upper Parisian bourgeoisie.

But who is this young invalid, matured before his time by suffering, who so candidly exposes the state of his soul, and who dates his letters from a little town of the Côte d'Or?

We had vainly sought for his name in the catalogue of the school Sainte-Genevieve, and we had asked ourselves where he had imbibed so fervent a faith, when we had the inspiration to write to the parish priest of S——, in whose arms, according to all probability, he breathed his last sigh.

Directly everything was explained, and some of Father Clerc's letters, preserved by a mourning family, soon reached us, and showed us to what an efficacious and sure direction he submitted that soul predestined to the cross and to the crown of innocence.

Louis (we suppress the name of his honorable family), early become a pupil of the College of Montgré, directed by the Jesuit Fathers, had conceived an affection for his masters which never altered. Towards the close of his studies, experiencing a strong attraction for the religious life,

he resolved to enter the novitiate; neither the railleries of certain friends nor the formal opposition of his father could turn him from this purpose, which he earnestly pursued. His father believed he could overcome his constancy by launching him in the world, and exacted that he should go through his law course. By advice of the curé of S——, Louis asked to be at least permitted to study in Paris, where he would have more liberty to frequent the Jesuit Fathers' house, and to confide the interests of his soul to them. It was thus he met Father Clerc, and we may judge of the welcome he received, from this little note which he treasured until his death:

"My Dear Child: You are still playing at hide-and-seek; since you have not caught me, you should continue to seek for me. I had already last week granted what you ask, so I repeat it; but I do not dispense you from finding me when you come to the house for that purpose, and when I am not gone out. Yours very affectionately in our Lord, Al. Clerc, S.J.

"Paris, June 12, 1867."

In the month of November Louis is at home, and writes in his turn:

"Reverend Father: Ever since I left Paris my thoughts have frequently travelled in search of you. How many times I have paid you those charming visits when you lavished upon me the treasures of your friendship, your wisdom, and your piety! I have preserved the most precious memories of those happy moments, and my re-

grets for having lost them daily grow more bitter. I would like to tell you how grateful I am for your kindness, for your unlimited devotedness, your inexhaustible charity. But I would be ashamed to attempt to acquit myself of the debt I owe you by sterile thanks. I would rather remain all my life your debtor, because I can only completely liberate myself in heaven. Meanwhile, I shall pray God to repay you a hundred-fold for that sweet peace you have given me, those consolations you have never refused to my importunities, and, in short, all those spiritual advantages I have gained from your good advice, your excellent direction."

Poor young man! attacked by an unknown malady, he does not feel strong enough to undertake the journey to Paris; at the most he hopes to go to Dijon in a month to resume, if possible, his interrupted studies.

"My Dear and very Dear Child" (Father Clerc replies, letter of December 16, 1867): "What is the meaning of this bad health, and are you not going to overcome it at last like a man? Is it a new sickness, or a continuation of that of last year? You do not tell me enough about it; I fear lest it may still be your bowels. It is hard to know how to reach so deep a disease, and it causes trouble in the whole system, even when it is not very violent. I believe in the efficacy of mineral waters for these maladies; think of this next season; and also in that of a good *régime*—a very regular life and physical exercise."

Here follow some hygienic counsels which betoken the most tender interest.

"Having left this bad Paris," he continues, "you ought not to be sick; perhaps you have carried about the germs of this disease these last two years. I would like for all that to see you again. Must I wait till 1869? As well say till Doomsday. If there is question of a sojourn depending on a great project, you do not say so; and in truth your letter is too short, and leaves me everything to ask.

"I say everything; that is too strong, and is grumbling without due cause, for your kind little letter tells me that you love me. There is nothing so sweet as to know that our love is returned. I love you too tenderly, my very dear child, not to derive a great joy from the expression of your affection.

"How pleasant your visits were to me, and how it delighted my heart to receive the communications of yours! There was in our intercourse, for me not only the pleasure and sweetness of a lively affection satisfied; there was also the joy of assisting you in your good intentions, and of reassuring a delicate and alarmed conscience. What consolation your desire of truth, your docility, your confidence gave me! Dear and beloved child of my heart, may God bless you and preserve you in fervor and fidelity!

"I am wonderfully well, and teach mathematics more and more; our school of the Rue des Postes prospers perfectly. I cannot tell you how excel-

lent our pupils are, especially those of the first division; their industry, docility, piety, almost exceed my desires; I believe we do not desire what we do not hope for, and I believe my hopes are surpassed. After God's grace, it is to the prudence, piety, and firmness of our father rector (Father Ducoudray) that we owe this.

"Farewell, my dear child. I shall have a big intention for you next Thursday and on the Feast of the Holy Innocents. I now embrace you and love you tenderly in the Sacred Heart of our Lord.

"AL. CLERC, S.J."

In the spring of the following year the young invalid believes himself born again to new life and strength. He has just been delivered, he says, from his terrible enemy, the tænia, or tapeworm, and he makes haste to communicate this good news to the worthy friend whose tender anxiety he desires to relieve. This friend had commenced a letter in which he is prodigal of counsels to hasten the sick boy's recovery. It terminates with the expression of the liveliest joy: "Yes, you are going to again become active, gay, vigorous, and I shall see you in the flower of youth. Certainly, I thank God with a glad heart for having preserved and cured my dear child for me. Further, I shall say Mass in thanksgiving for this blessing; and, in order that you may unite your intention with mine, I fix Sunday, May 24, the Feast of Our Lady of Help, as the day.

. . . . . .

"You want a letter for the Ascension. You shall have it also; and if you had asked that it might

carry you all my interest in your welfare, all my good wishes for you, all my blessings upon you, you should have that too, for I put them all in it, and these words of our Lord besides: '*Vado parare vobis locum*,'* for you to occupy that Thursday you will spend in your room."

A whole month passes and the poor boy has not yet regained his strength; nevertheless he writes (letter of June 23, 1868):

"REVEREND FATHER: Your kind letter of last month gave me such pleasure that it is to you I address the first lines I am able to write. I was very greatly tormented by the enemy you know of, and to deliver me from him it was necessary to assault him so rudely that I am even now scarcely convalescent. My strength is only beginning to return, and does not allow of my writing you more than a few words, which are very insignificant on account of their brevity. But at least I shall have thanked you, I shall have recommended myself anew to your prayers, and I shall have repeated the expression of my most sincere affection and my filial devotedness, etc.

"Your child in our Lord, "LOUIS C."

"MY DEAR LOUIS" (Father Clerc replies, letter of July 2, 1868): "I am astonished and distressed to learn of the severe struggle you have gone through. I had not supposed it would be so long or so terrible, and I imagined the difficulty was rather in recognizing the enemy than in conquer-

* "I go to prepare a place for you."

ing him. More than a month elapsed between the Ascension and the 23d of June, and while you were a prey to the greatest sufferings, and your life was threatened, I was resting in the confidence that your convalescence, already decided, was progressing to a perfect recovery.

"This time, at least, are you thoroughly rid of the head of the hydra? Have his terrible fangs let go their hold? At your age health is rapidly regained; and, surrounded as you are with care and affection, your happiness at returning to life, great as it is of itself, will receive new charms from the road you pass along and the hands that support your feeble steps.

"Oh! I am very sure you have been patient and resigned, gentle, if I may so speak, towards suffering. It is, perhaps, more difficult during convalescence to preserve one's self from the exactions of sensuality. Can you see a mother, a sister hovering about you, anxious, attentive, without claiming, without provoking, their devotion? It would be better to meekly await it, and sometimes to deny it to yourself.

"It is likewise difficult to limit the multitudinous little cares bestowed upon our body, our health, to what are necessary (these are a duty) or even useful (these are also in order), without seeking all the delicacies good only to satisfy our sensuality.

"If I thus preach to you (*opportune, importune,* as St. Paul says) it is because I know well to whom I am writing, and that my condolences no more

than my hopes addressed to the heart of my friend, will not be enough for the heart of my dear son in our Lord.

"Do not fail, as soon as you can go to church, to receive Holy Communion. As for me, I will offer Holy Mass for you in thanksgiving, and also for the intention of your full and prompt recovery, and this on Thursday, July 8.

"I shall, then, see you again, as it were, renovated, risen from the dead with a new life, stronger, more robust than before, and also with a soul made perfect by suffering.

"O my very dear son! all is good for those who love God. *Diligentibus Deum omnia co-operantur in bonum.* I firmly believe it! God, who is good even towards the wicked, has a special affectionate and paternal providence for those who love him.

"When we await all things, when we receive all things as coming from his hand, can there be anything fatal in our destiny? No, neither sickness nor death. He destines you for heaven, and he leads you there by the road you need."

What strength, and at the same time what gentleness! The young man was worthy of these counsels, which reached him most seasonably, as we shall see, on the eve of the supreme trials that were in reserve for him.

A letter, Louis' last, written at two different times (September 10 and 11), reminds us of the plaintive accents of King Ezechias: "In the midst of my days I shall go to the gates of the tomb. . . ."

"My kind father, it is ages since I have written to you, and during all this time God knows how often I have thought of you. Until just now I have been incapable of holding a pen. My health has passed through many trying phases, and I scarcely know how it is that I am still in this world. I shall, however, endeavor to tell you by taking breath several times, if necessary.

"I have not forgotten that you offered to continue to be my spiritual guide. I do not know if you understood that I accepted; but without any doubt your last letter contained counsels so precious, so exceedingly appropriate to my needs, that God alone could have inspired you with them.

"I am going to ask you for still more, my kind father. If you but knew what good your kind words do me!

"I have a great remorse. It will presently be my ninth month of illness; what a grace this is that God has been pleased to grant me! But I have profited by it so little that I have religiously preserved all my faults, and I am no more ready to die than on the first day. My God, forgive me! Father, help me! I must be ready to die. Death is at my door; I must save my soul at any cost. . . ."

Here the poor invalid stops, being too weak to write more; but the next day he adds:

"I am no more than a skeleton. Persons who have not seen me for some time do not recognize me. . . ." Then he enumerates his miseries—miseries of the disease increased by the remedies—and

he begs in the most touching manner for the help he needs to bear the burden that weighs upon him, and to turn to God alone with a confident and submissive heart.

Was this letter answered? Some words pencilled on the back and margins indicate the nature of the reply Father Clerc intended to make; but this reply has not been found, and who knows if death, more prompt, did not anticipate it?

But we have the certainty that death was gentle to that privileged soul, so gentle itself and so humble. A witness of its passage to a better life, the curé of S——, writes us: "That beautiful soul was ripe for heaven." Alluding to Louis' vocation and his desire of the religious life, he adds:

"God was not willing to lend you our dear Louis, as he lent you his model, Louis de Gonzaga."

It is true the virtuous young man had not been able to cross the threshold of the novitiate, and he had not before dying received from us the sweet name of brother; but God, in withdrawing him from the world that was not worthy of him, placed him in heaven in the virginal choir of the Louis de Gonzagas, the Stanislaus Kostkas, and the Berchmans, and it was there Father Clerc found his dear child again, to lose him no more, when he, in his turn, went to take possession of the glory he had won at the price of his blood.

Let us now return to his dear little sailors who had so large a share in his solicitude, excited,

doubtless, by the remembrance of the dangers he himself ran in the career he saw them entering while still so young, sometimes so innocent, and always so inexperienced.*

We have remarked one among them who was evidently the object of a quite special interest on the part of his professor, and whose correspondence, begun at the school Sainte-Genevieve, continued on board the school-ship, and far longer than that, and through all the vicissitudes of his sailor's life was uniformly filial and confiding. Not to be indiscreet, we asked his permission to make use of his letters; he desired to see them first, and, in returning the package to us, he heartily thanks us for the pleasure we afforded him. "In looking over these pages," he writes, "I went back to the happiest period of my youth. During the short space of an hour I lived again those two years of my stay at the Rue des Postes—years so fleeting, so full, and so fruitful. I found again my companions of other days, my professors, all friends. . . ."

And here, his recollections crowding upon him, he let his pen run on. Why should not the reader share the pleasure we experienced in perusing his letter so overflowing with sincere emotion? Father Clerc will be seen therein as he appeared to his pupils, in the spontaneity and unconstraint of

*In the second period of his professorship (1867-9) Father Clerc also sent pupils to the "Ecole Centrale." But these young men, not being gone from Paris, visited him frequently and did not write to him; consequently they have left few traces in the bundle of his correspondence.

his amiable and charming character. He in whose favor we will now be silent for a little space left Saint-Barbara and arrived at the school Sainte-Genevieve while still a child; he has since been an ensign in the navy; to-day, returned to civil life, he has his own hearth-stone, where we wish him sons that will resemble him. The man has preserved the good sentiments of his young years, and this is the most beautiful homage he could render to the memory of his dear and venerated master.

"Behold me," he writes us, "knocking for the first time at the door of the school, and timidly soliciting a place among the children of the house.

"It was vacation, . . . the hive was silent. In the distance in the long corridors black robes pass and disappear, . . . then other black robes which seem to me gigantic shadows.

"Must it be said (bah! at fourteen years) ?—I was almost afraid. Suddenly I find myself in presence of the superior, Rev. Father Turquand. That beautiful countenance framed in white hair inspired respect; peace and serenity were reflected from it, and the sight alone did good. What did he say to me? What did I reply? I never quite knew, troubled as I was; all I understood was that I must pass an examination.

"Oh! even now all my terror comes back to me. The father-superior had me taken into a study-hall; the door was closed; I had before me an immense blackboard, beside me one of those black robes I had seen in the corridors. I dropped my

eyes, not daring to look either at the robe or the board, when I heard a very pleasant, frank voice say : ' Well, my child, you want to be one of our pupils ?'

" I was little accustomed to that kindly tone in the colleges where I had been. Those words, ' my child,' so new to me, made a singular impression upon me ; I would have liked to find words to thank him who pronounced them, but none came to my lips. He, however, continued, gently questioning me about what I had done up to then, what were my tastes, my pleasures, etc. He did not ask me if I was strong in mathematics ; they required of me, he said, only good conduct and good will ; they would answer for the rest. . . .

" In proportion as he spoke I felt more reassured. I raised my eyes ; I had never seen a more open, a more loyal countenance. The forehead was high, the glance full of intelligence. I felt myself in the presence of a superior man ; but what was most striking in that physiognomy was benevolence, kindness ; it shone in every feature. I felt myself attracted by an extraordinary sympathy. I am ignorant of what impression I then made myself, but the conversation insensibly took a turn more full of kindness on the one side, and of confidence and unreserve on the other. I say conversation—read confession ; at the end of half an hour I had opened all my heart.

" And when this was finished, the father, taking me by the hand, led me back to the father superior ; he said a few words to him in a low tone,

and, smiling at me, went out. Father Turquand then informed me that Father Clerc consented to admit me to his class, and that from that day I was a member of the school.

"I was enchanted. But what delighted me most was to think that I was to be in the class of Father Clerc !—of that father I had just left ; . . . that I could see him and hear him every day.

"Such as he appeared to me in that first interview, such I always found him afterwards—straightforward, simple, and indulgent. We—'the children,' as he called us—we worshipped him. What a joy it was when out of class-time he came among us, and how we surrounded him ! Did he descend to the court during a recreation, immediately we ran to him, we tried to speak to him, we forced him to reply to us. Sometimes he was obliged to be angry in order to make us keep on playing ; then he would threaten to leave the court. Most frequently he pretended to take an immense interest in a famous game of ball or of gymnastics. Oh ! then there was excitement, incredible animation ; it was a contest to see who could strike the most splendid blows, who would risk the most perilous feats.

"Later, when he left the class, worn out with fatigue and labor (as well as macerations of all sorts, for that man, so kind to others, was pitiless to himself), when, on returning after the vacation, we learned that Father Clerc had gone, there was a general consternation. I know who shed most sincere tears."

Soon the heart overflows, and our dear correspondent recalls, now his comrades fallen on the battle-field, now his masters immolated by the Commune. "Father Clerc, Father Ducoudray," he cries, "dear and holy victims, is it thus you must crown a life of abnegation and devotedness?

"O my Father Clerc! you used often to say to me: 'When I am no longer able to educate young persons and make them Frenchmen and men of worth, the dearest wish of my heart is to be sent as a missionary to China, to die for my God and his holy religion.' Ah! who could have foreseen that this wish would be so soon accomplished?"

I have allowed the man to speak, and surely no one will take it amiss; but now let us go back twelve or fourteen years and see how the child expressed himself after that cruel departure of Father Clerc.

After some excuses and explanations about his having been prevented from writing by an accident of some sort, he says: "I earnestly hope that if you come to Paris this year, or if I return to Angers next year, we shall see one another. It would be such a pleasure to me to tell you in words how grateful I am for all the kindnesses you lavished upon me during the year just passed! And I must tell you that I am not the only one who has regretted you, and that each boy looked very sorrowful when he learned that you had left all your children."

Then follow details about the changes in the house, the new professor *who does not trifle*, the

studies to which each one applies himself with all his heart. Had not Father Clerc promised that they would succeed ?

In the following letter the young correspondent, who is a choir-boy, cannot say enough about the ceremonies of All Saints' day ; which proves (by way of parenthesis) that such little duties offer an innocent and agreeable diversion to studies which are extremely dry and suggest nothing to the heart. Then he adds : " Finally, my dear father, you ask me for particulars. What shall I tell you ? That I have grown a great deal, and that this makes me begin to think of the day when I shall have to leave this house ? I foresee that I shall be very sad, for this is the first time I have felt that I loved the people with whom I lived, and that I have felt myself loved in return. For after all what is a college ? An assemblage of individuals who come there to pursue their studies, and who believe themselves obliged to quarrel with everybody. Here, on the contrary, besides the pupils being on good terms with one another, the fathers on their side do all they can to make themselves beloved by their pupils. How would it be possible for concord not to reign in the house ? But it is you, my dear father, whom I ought to thank and love more than all the rest ; for, pariah as I was, it was you who first drew me to you ; therefore rest assured I shall always be grateful to you, and afar as well as near, I shall always in my prayers include your name among those that are dearest to me. But will you not come back to Paris ? " etc.

Here are some lines from the next letter:

"When shall I be able to date my letters from the *Borda?* When conclude them with these pompous words: *Done in the harbor of Brest, on board the school-ship?* We must wait patiently; is it not so, dear father? and especially work—I do both.'

. . . . . .

"You recommend us, dear father, to live on good terms and in harmony with one another; I assure you this recommendation is superfluous this year. How pleased you would be to see your children forming but one family at gymnastics and the other games!"

. . . . . .

"Perhaps, dear father, you were astonished at my saying I read P——'s letter. . . . But I must tell you that your letters are grabbed by everybody, and almost read to pieces. As soon as one of us has received a letter from you, it goes the rounds of the whole division; we form a circle to hear it; then, from the pupils, your orders of the day go sometimes to the fathers. So, dear father, do not be saving of your kind letters, which are always full of good advice, and still more of affection."

The child is about to enter into retreat; he begs a Mass for his intention, and this in the most earnest words. After Christmas, another description of a beautiful religious solemnity with this final reflection: "I assure you, dear father, that it is a very touching sight to see all the pupils, the entire college, approaching the Holy Table on

great feasts." And so on during the whole year, thanks to this amiable correspondent, the old professor knows all that happens to his dear pupils, their progress more or less rapid, the place of each in the quarterly classing, the discouragement of this one, the sickness of another, etc., etc. Then comes the long-wished-for day when a first letter bears at the top: *Borda, Harbor of Brest*, and begins in the following manner: "My dear father, you have heard that I was accepted, and now I have to thank you for your part in my success. Indeed, if you had ceased to encourage me, if you had not constantly shown me a truly paternal kindness, I would have been disheartened the first year, and I should not be able to-day to date my letter from the *Borda*. Accept, then, the assurance of my deep gratitude, and add to all your favors the pardon of my negligence." A little further on in the same letter we read: "On arriving here I went to see the Jesuit Fathers. I made the acquaintance of Father L——; he is the one my correspondent named to me, for I knew nobody here. . . . Notwithstanding my joy, I did not bid Father C—— (his professor at the School Sainte-Genevieve) good-by without some sadness at leaving that house where I had spent two years, most certainly the best of my life." On board the school-ship the correspondence continues, filled with details about the old pupils of Father Clerc, who watches over them from a distance as he did when with them. For instance, he learns—fortunate conjuncture—that the former commander

of the *Cassini* is now in the harbor of Brest on board the *Turenne*, which is subject to his orders; behold a true friend for those dear children, and that friend makes no delay in taking Father Clerc's place toward them. "Allow me to thank you," one of them writes to him, "for an acquaintance you have enabled me to make, and which is very valuable to me. I refer to Mr. de Plas. He is a very charming and a very distinguished man, a true officer of the navy. Several times he has sent his boat for D——, P——, T——, and me, and we have dined on board the *Turenne* and spent a delightful evening."

Another quotation (and it will be the last), from a letter written on board the *Magenta*. In a trip to Paris the naval cadet had spent a few moments in the house of the Rue des Postes; he had found Father Clerc there, and the visit had awakened old feelings which he could not restrain: "In walking with you through that house where I spent two such quiet and happy years, I imagined myself three years younger. I beheld myself again completely absorbed by those grave occupations which then were the only ones that had the privilege of keeping me awake at night, ball-playing and especially gymnastics. How many times when you were trying to get an important demonstration through my head, my rebellious spirit was dreaming of a new perilous leap!

. . . . . .

"How many times since I left it, have I had cause to regret that hospitable house in an inner

room of which the sombre robe of the priest gave so kind a welcome to the somewhat stained uniform of the little Barbiste ! . . . The gamin became a youth. Has the youth turned out a man ? I know not (perhaps you can tell him, Reverend Father, you who know him so well) ; but what I do know is that of the gamin there remain only the memory and the attachment to those who so cordially extended him their hand."

We will add nothing ; such testimonies, rendered so bountifully in the freedom and unreserve of the most intimate intercourse, may be left without a commentary. Where can sincerity be found if not in such letters ? One is tempted to apply to them these words of Holy Scripture : *Ex ore infantium . . . perfecisti laudem.* Yes, verily, the mouths of children or of very young persons, the lips that are yet strangers to disguise and flattery, could alone have given to these praises, which I have only gathered up, that perfect truthfulness as well as that charm which pervades them.

But we must not terminate this chapter, consecrated to Father Clerc and his pupils, without mentioning those among them who, after having loved him so much, proved by dying for the honor and defence of their country that they were capable of understanding that heroic soul and of entertaining sentiments as exalted as were his.

The first is Roland du Luart, who, struck by three balls, fell (December 18, 1864) at Etla, near Oajaca, during the campaign in Mexico where he had displayed the most brilliant valor. On learn-

ing of the arrival of his son's body at Saint Nazaire, Count Luart immediately besought the presence of Father Clerc, whom he invited to pronounce a few words at the funeral ceremony. "There are only too many lessons enclosed in that coffin," replied Father Clerc, and he hastened to gratify the pious wishes of his dear Roland's father and mother.

Three others watered with their blood the soil of France invaded by the stranger.

At Gravelotte (August 16, 1870) Louis Couturier, an officer under General Bataille, had his arm pierced by a ball, but did not discontinue his service under the fire of the enemy until a shell burst beneath his horse, which was killed at the same time that he himself fell, fatally wounded in the abdomen. Carried from the field on an ambulance, he died two days later, after having piously received the last sacraments and while pressing the crucifix to his heart.

At Fréteval (December 14, 1870) Maurice de Boysson, who had five brothers in active service during that lamentable war: one of them fell when he did. An ensign of the navy, Maurice had just returned from the disastrous and useless Baltic expedition when he met his old professor at Cherbourg. "I regret," he wrote to his parents, "not being able to follow the retreat he is giving, but I go to see him feequently, and I think we are very well satisfied with one another." He marched at the head of a company of marine fusiliers in that heroic affair of Fréteval, where Commander Collet

fell with his skull shattered, and Maurice at his side, a ball buried in his lungs.

Finally, at the bloody battle of Mans (January 11, 1871) Maurice du Bourg, a hero of Castelfidardo and Mentana, who had been one of the first to respond to the call of Pius IX., and had remained until the 20th of September, faithful to the noble pontifical banner. He was leading to the fray his dear zouaves, now the Volunteers of the West, when he was struck in the forehead by a ball at the moment he was trying to carry the plain of Avours, occupied by the Prussians. By his Christian virtues as well as by his chivalric valor he was truly of the race of the Cathelineaus, the Lescures, and the Bonchamps.

Such were Father Clerc's pupils. I speak, be it well understood, only of the dead.

As for those who, thanks be to God, are still full of life and ambition, I dedicate to them these pages, of which they have furnished me the matter, and wherein several of them will recognize themselves. May they all find therein the charm that attaches to the memory of the happiest and purest days : to revive, if need be, their better feelings ; to excite them to good by the example of those dear departed ones ; and especially, never to become for any of them a reproach.

CHAPTER XIII.

FATHER CLERC AND HIS OLD COMRADES.

GREAT was the astonishment of Father Clerc's comrades, who, having known him only in his life of dissipation and pleasure, after long years suddenly found him a priest and a Jesuit. *Quantum mutatus ab illo!* This was the first impression, and some of them never got over it. Yet the greater number, even more pleased than surprised, gradually became accustomed to his new vesture and his new mode of life. Enchanted to prove by the evidence of their own eyes that he had lost none of his spirit, his gayety, his old amiability, they soon said: "He is not changed, he is still the same," and the old intimacy revived of itself from the very first interview. What Clerc had become by leaving the world did not lessen their confidence, rather the contrary; and if by chance they put his good-will to the test, then especially they congratulated themselves on having in him a sure, devoted, and most useful friend. Accordingly, with very few exceptions, all were glad to visit him. The known earnestness of his religious convictions did not render him inaccessible to those who had not the happiness of sharing them. I

might name such a savant, his close friend from the time they first met, companions in promotion at the Polytechnic; certainly a very distinguished man, but one who has the reputation, merited, I believe, of being extremely indulgent to the leaders of free thought. I am very sure that Clerc, who was frankness itself, did not spare him censure on that score; nevertheless, their friendship never cooled, and lasted until the bloody days of the Commune. Having himself offered such a long resistance to grace before yielding to its empire, he despaired of nobody, and, whatever was the eagerness of his desire, he knew how to wait. More than once the conquest of souls dear to him was the reward of his charitable and engaging longanimity.

The reader, perhaps, remembers Mr. C——, one of the two comrades with whom, on his return from Gabon, Clerc shared for several months the enjoyment of a little dwelling and garden situated in one of the suburbs of Lorient.* A Christian of so fresh a date applying himself to the reading of Saint Thomas was a matter of astonishment to the two friends, who at first thought him deranged, tried which could best tease him about his religious ideas, engaged him in discussions half-serious and half-playful, and, finding they could make no impression upon him, ended by nicknaming him *Little Monk*. Meanwhile Mr. C—— was not quite as insensible as he thought himself to that example,

* We mentioned Mr. C—— in chapter iii.

which he met with all the appearances of a jeering scepticism, and he owned later that he was influenced in spite of himself. That was in 1847. Towards the close of 1850 the *Cassini*, destined for China, being in the harbor of Lorient, Clerc goes there to superintend the preparations for her departure; he meets his old friend again, and this time he *brings him very near Christian truth.* Four more years pass; Clerc returns from China, finds Mr. C—— married, and cannot refuse the hospitality offered him by the young household. Their relations are more intimate and cordial than ever; Clerc announces that he shall leave Lorient only to enter the novitiate of the Society of Jesus. "Why, that is suicide!" cries Mr. C——, and he endeavors to prove to his friend that life is not so bad after all, and that it is a shame for him to renounce the many joys it still promises him. As a final argument he adduces his own example, and shows the two pretty children that have been born to him during his friend's last voyage. He is answered at first rather feebly, and with a certain embarrassment, as if there was little hope of making him understand. But soon, in a walk the two friends take together, the ice is broken. Clerc gives free course to his thoughts, his most private sentiments, and he expresses himself with a captivating eloquence. Mr. C—— has never forgotten that memorable conversation "of Saint Christopher's bridge," which revealed to him all the loftiness of that beautiful soul. What was it, then, that Clerc said to his friend? "That man's

destiny on earth is to aspire to the highest good, and that for his part he means to do this to the utmost of his power; that undoubtedly the joys Mr. C—— has been telling him of have their seduction, but that they do not tempt him; that he desires good for its own sake, and that it exists only in God. There is his hope, his ambition; all else is nothing to him; accordingly, he yields himself without reserve to the love of the sovereign good, of God, of infinite perfection."

In relating this conversation to us Mr. C—— says: "I am trying to give you the key-note of it; it was aspiration towards the pure love of God. I had read such things in the 'Lives of the Saints,' but hitherto I had believed them only partially; this time I saw them with my own eyes, and doubt was henceforth impossible to me. I had the good sense to admire that enthusiasm and that virtue. I understood that Clerc could do no better than walk in the path he had chosen, and from that moment I was convinced that he would become a saint."

Before starting for the novitiate Clerc, leaving his uniform and baggage in Mr. C——'s house, gave his sword to little Paul, the eldest of his dear friend's sons.*

In the month of December Mr. C—— wrote to Saint-Acheul: "I will acknowledge to you, my dear Clerc, that your short stay in my house and the determination you took have given me a great

* This weapon has since passed into the possession of a captain of a frigate, who preserves it as a relic.

deal to reflect upon and have slightly disturbed the quiet I enjoyed." The thought of eternity was laying hold of that soul accustomed to think only of the interests and joys of this world. Eight days later another letter begins thus: "I have just been most cruelly tried! My Paul, my fine and cherished boy, has been taken from us in the midst of his beauty and strength." And in four months Paul's brother was no more! "Oh!" cries the poor father, "the happy days I spent in my little house with my beautiful children, my dear wife, and you, my kind friend! Now my two little ones are sleeping side by side in the cemetery."

What a lesson! Was it understood? No, not quite, in the beginning. The correspondence continues through fifteen years—that is, from Alexis' entrance into the novitiate until the eve of the sad events that placed the seal on his heroism. He does not spare counsels, exhortations, even reproaches; but how they all come from his heart! Who could be offended at those earnest and pressing appeals, proofs of a boundless friendship? He accuses himself of having been harsh and caustic in a conversation they had in Paris, and the result of which was decisive. Mr. C—— does not complain; he renders full justice to his friend and thanks him for his frankness. Father Clerc returns to the subject again with much humility for his own faults, but he is rejoiced: the soul of his friend is saved. "My dear friend," he writes, "it is a sure mark of friendship on your part to have written me of the great change which God has ope-

rated in your soul ; you judged rightly of the joy it would afford me. I join with you in thanking God, and on the 12th of November I will say, for your intention and in gratitude for what God has done for you, a Mass of thanksgiving.

"Since our last interview I have not thought of our long and painful conversation without sorrow, and I much feared that God in his goodness, seeing that you wandered away from him in prosperity, would bring you back by adversity. Fortunately he has not needed to do that ; and it is better, not only on account of the trouble you escape, but because of the greater generosity of a spontaneous conversion.

"When I said on leaving you—and it was to conclude our conversation with as little unpleasantness as possible—that he who followed in good faith no matter what road would be saved provided he always conformed his conduct to what he believed to be the truth, I acknowledge I had not the hope of seeing your good faith yield to the first ray of truth without a longer combat ; but you prove this proposition still more strongly. You prove it in the sense in which it should be most frequently (if not always) understood : namely, that God soon shows the truth to those who seek it.

"Our discussion was difficult, painful on both sides, harsh on mine ; God knows, however, that even then I had for you the heart of a friend ; I do not regret it, because friendship ought not to be a weak condescension, and because the result has been so happy.

"Now that you share my faith, you understand how the certainty with which I spoke of what regards it could not help rendering my assertions decisive, absolute; I think that in talking with you I defended what is merely matter of opinion only with much restriction and with a disposition to yield readily. But it is useless to apologize for a line of proceeding which you judge favorably. I believe that before dismissing this subject I ought to tell you in few words the judgment I then formed of you. You are no longer the same man, and I speak only with a good intention.

"All just ideas in metaphysics, in religion, in morality, in politics, I will say even in history, had suffered shipwreck in your soul. There was but one left. Fortunately it was an important one; with it all others could be reconquered: it was the idea of the last end. Upon that one thing, in a natural point of view, you always spoke correctly. It will be an interesting study for you to discover if it had the influence I believe it had upon the great change which has taken place in your soul.

"Your letter of November 1st does you the highest honor: *Qui se humiliat, exaltabitur.* And in truth you wrote it in the spirit which animated St. Augustine when he composed his 'Confessions'; that anxiety to repair the evil one has done, to retreat, to acknowledge our proud weaknesses, is a proof of generosity. If men are forced to forget wrongs that are so sincerely acknowledged, so heartily regretted, Almighty God knows how to turn them into merits. Once again, errors could

not be more nobly confessed ; your confession is so hearty, so prompt, so complete, that you may see in it one of those special graces which God grants but seldom."

Now will we see with what good-natured playfulness and what ingenious grace Father Clerc urges his friend, who defends himself as well as he can, to tend to perfection always and everywhere ? Perfection ! he wants it not only in things relating to God's service, but even in such as pass for indifferent, and which common opinion banishes to a sphere where Christianity has no right of inspection. Mr. C—— had said, we shall know presently in what sense : "I am always a hussar, but I no longer love the sabretache." * His friend returns the words with comments :

"'I am always a hussar, but I no longer love the sabretache.'

"My dear Friend and Brother in our Lord : Behold my text, and I might choose a better one ; however, we will develop it with a certain freedom.

"The inclination we have for novelty is a particular grace of God, and since beginnings are always difficult, it was worthy of Him who gently conducts all things to their end to implant that sentiment in our hearts. Afterwards, when things have lost that attraction of novelty, God has again most kindly arranged that habit should also have a

*It is unnecessary to explain, unless perhaps to a few uninitiated readers, that the sabretache is a sort of flat pocket that hangs beside the sabre of certain cavalry men. Mr. C—— defended his own case by attacking that part of a hussar's equipment the utility of which is rather questionable.

sweetness which will make us accomplish them willingly. Who can help admiring so wise and fatherly a providence?

"Let us leave the young hussar to love his sabretache, and the old cuirassier to no longer feel the chafing of the armor to which he is condemned.

"But you understand that there is something better than the vain-glory of the first and the insensibility of the second.

"You may tell me as much as you like that you were not made for perfection; I know what to think about it, and I shall always tell you what I think.

"In the way of a sermon I am going to give you a sample of my philosophical studies of last year.* You are not made for perfection. *Distinguo:* To attain it, *concedo.* To desire it, to tend to it, *nego.* And you do desire it most certainly.

"Let us return to the sabretache: Are there, then, no motives possible for our acts other than puerility and insensibility? Our will is our own and we can render it very perfect. What would you think of the hussar who should love the singular object in question because it is a sign that he serves his country and his king, that he belongs to a select corps which in battle is exposed to the greatest dangers? From a human point of view is he not at least a sage, if not a hero?

"But if he regards his sabretache as the seal of

* Father Clerc had just been reviewing his philosophy at Vaugirard.

the servitude God imposes upon him through the medium of his superiors, and loves it as such, is he not a saint?

"There was a young man in the Society named John Berchmans, the cause of whose beatification is now in process; * he loved his dear cassock so much that he always kissed it before putting it on. We take the pious practice from him. Is not this, for us, loving the sabretache in the right way?

"However, one cannot always nor every day love the sabretache, yet a real hussar does not for that carry it the less and is not the less a good hussar.

"You have no longer a natural attraction, taste, for your profession; you feel all its difficulties and charges; no illusion continues to conceal them from you. This is because you are capable of persevering in it through higher motives—namely, for the sake of serving your country, especially of serving God disinterestedly just there where he has put you; for the sake of accomplishing the rude mortification and the patient sanctification of labor by which man attains his last end.

"This is so true that if it should be proposed to you to go back to the illusions that procured you certain consolations, you would refuse, and would prefer your present sufferings. The true, the noble, the great—this is what the heart of man requires. Let us rejoice; we shall one day possess the truth, the majesty, the immensity of God.

* It has since been decided.

"My sermon is finished and I see you smiling; he will have to lower his pretensions, think you? Do not be afraid, I am not so strong in act as in word; still I am in earnest when I speak, but I will admit, if you wish, that I animate myself, that I intoxicate myself, with my own words. What else would you have us do? Let us derive the least possible harm from our miseries; let us get drunk with love, enthusiasm, for what is perfect; we will always fall far enough back in practice. Let us permit our aspirations to rise, to incessantly rise even to the throne of God; his goodness will, perhaps, answer our imperfect prayers."

In sending us these letters, pious and cherished relics of which we are only the depositary, Mr. C—— adds a few words about the winning qualities of his holy friend, qualities that were heightened by the generosity and grandeur of his Christian sentiments: "That beauty of soul and that grandeur of virtue did not in the least lessen the amiability, the playfulness of his character, and I have always considered him since his last stay at Lorient as an elect soul whom I admired while being just as much at ease with him as before. He evinced for me and mine an extraordinary friendship, greater than I could have merited, although I loved him dearly. I have sometimes read that the saints have on earth had similar friendships; it is thus that I regard ours, and I firmly believe he continues it towards us in heaven. He was very fond of the two little children I lost in 1854, and I would like to send you the letter he wrote their

mother to console her, but we have mislaid it for the moment. I think he is with them, and that all three protect our family. I always believed that Clerc would have a magnificent death. I was not deceived, and I can picture to myself his joy at giving his life for Jesus Christ."

Who would recognize from such language the man that had so much difficulty in treating seriously the admirable change which religion had worked in his friend? May we not also say of Mr. C——, *Quantum mutatus ab illo!* And is he not, in his turn, become a very consoling example of the so patient goodness of God and of the omnipotence of grace?

Another example, not of conversion, but of the salutary and gentle influence Father Clerc exercised over those who, having known him in the world, deemed themselves happy to find him again just what his new vocation had made him.

One day at Laval he received the visit of two comrades, both old navy officers. "These gentlemen," a person acquainted with the incident tells us, "left the house charmed with his amiable simplicity, his gayety, and his gracious holiness." One of the two visitors, M. de Vauguion, could almost call himself Father Clerc's neighbor, the Château des Alleux (near Cossé, Mayenne), where he resided, being only a few hours from Laval. As he urged the father to return his visit, the latter, in order to harmonize the inclinations of his zeal with the duties of friendship, went to Les Alleux and divided his time between the château

and the parish where he gave a mission. Hardly had he returned to Laval when he was called back to his friend, who was seized with a dangerous attack of inflammation of the lungs. Father Clerc almost flies to Les Alleux, and entering the sick man's room, says simply: "I have come to help you sanctify your illness." The offices of his ministry are gladly accepted, and, after having reconciled that beloved soul, he departs greatly consoled by the encouraging dispositions in which he leaves it perhaps on the very threshold of eternity.

M. de Vauguion recovered. In 1870, beholding France invaded, he returned to the service, displayed a brilliant valor in the face of the enemy, and showed himself at all times and in all places ardent in the accomplishment of duty; but he received in the camps the germs of the disease to which he was to fall a victim. Named a deputy to the National Assembly, he was at his post at Versailles when, April 11, 1871, he was forced to take to his bed. During this illness, which was his last, he one day anxiously enquired: "And Father Clerc—provided he is not in the hands of those creatures of the Commune—how I would like to hear from him!" Enquiries were made, and it was learned that the father was confined at Mazas. The friend to whom he could no longer bring the supreme consolations, terminated his exile with sentiments of most fervent piety on the 20th of April. Clerc had still a month to spend behind the bars. Let us note a circumstance that has a claim to a place

among these pious souvenirs. The Château des Alleux visited by the father in 1865 has since been appropriated to a use worthy of the exalted and Christian sentiments of its former master, and to-day it shelters a little colony formed of our brothers driven from the province of Venice, who are preparing by a life of recollection and study for the labors of the apostolate.

For many reasons the commander of the *Cassini*, become captain of a ship, was, in Father Clerc's eyes, something more and better than a comrade, and the cordiality of their intercourse never made the former lieutenant forget the distance which honorable grades of service put between him and his respected chief. During long years, in writing to him he only addressed him as "my dear commander"; but a day came when he called him by the sweeter name of "brother": Mr. de Plas had become his brother by entering the novitiate of the Society of Jesus.

Here, in placing in my hands fifteen years of correspondence, I am begged to observe the greatest discretion. I shall make this a law, and shall be very careful not to disturb by an untimely publicity a life which, after having been well-known to the world, desires to shroud itself in darkness and silence.

The commander honored in his old lieutenant the quality of religious, and the sacerdotal character with which he saw him clothed. The confidence he had always had in him was consequently increased, and he did not disdain to consult him when there was

question of his interior or of certain duties inherent to his position, and of which he believed with reason Father Clerc was a good judge.

The Italian alliance, for instance, led him to foresee certain occasions when his conscience might be at variance with the exigencies of military obedience. "I have nearly recovered my peace of soul," he wrote, "since I have followed your advice; still, there come to me severe squalls of disgust at my career when I think that circumstances might have called me to figure at the banquets and fêtes of the *roi galantuomo* in Naples. I am sure, though, that when God sends me trials of that sort he will make known to me what he wishes me to do. It appears that some of our officers have taken steps to avoid the honor of being decorated by the *soi-disant* King of Italy; I am very glad of it." The father replied to him: "I think you might very well ask for a command in Chinese waters, and I advise you to do so. I think also that they will not misunderstand you, and that they will not appoint you to the Mediterranean squadron."

Although M. de Plas, living in La Charente, was not as near Laval as M. de Vauguion, he obtained a visit from the father, who stayed with him at Puychein, and thence evangelized the parish of Saint-Romain. On receiving the promise of this visit the commander wrote:

"Dear Friend and Reverend Father: It is about fourteen years since, to my proposition of making a cruise among the Catholic missions, you

replied: '*Magnificat anima mea Dominum*'; your kind letter has brought to my lips that beginning of the Blessed Virgin's beautiful canticle."

We can guess what were their conversations, in which spiritual matters always had the largest place. Ideas of a religious vocation had vigorously assailed M. de Plas when he saw one of his most intimate friends, M. de Cuers, abandon the service to enter the congregation of which he became the superior-general. Several retreats not having brought him sufficient light, Father Clerc could only advise him to accept the employments of his rank, wherein opportunities would not be wanting for him to preach by example; it was thus he became flag-master of Admiral Bouët-Willaumez on board the *Solferino*, and major of the fleet at Rochefort. Meanwhile years were added to years, and the time would soon arrive for the commander to retire; his inclinations for the religious life had only grown stronger, but he feared that his age was an obstacle to the realization of his wishes. Father Clerc then said to him: "You are well versed in the 'Spiritual Exercises' of St. Ignatius, you are acquainted with his *rules for election;* you can apply them to the decision I propose to you." He proposed to M. de Plas to enter the Society of Jesus, provided he could obtain a dispensation of age; this dispensation, Father Clerc thought, would not be refused to a postulant of such standing.

The election was made, the decision taken, the dispensation asked and obtained; and some time

afterwards the commander, whose last ties to the world were broken, could write to his friend from the novitiate of Angers: "Even as you told me, and promised me, so to speak, I find here great peace, and God repays me most generously for the little share of good will I brought him." Father De Plas' novitiate, commenced at Angers, was finished in Rome; and there he received from his friend outpourings of the heart like this: "I frankly acknowledge that I also am most anxious that we should meet again. It is such a joy to me to think of you since I know that you are in the Society; I am certain that you congratulate yourself every day more and more for the favor God has granted you, that you bless God from the depths of your heart, and every day love him more and more; and this affords me sweet consolation." A visit to the port of Cherbourg during the Lent he preached in one of the parishes of the city, suggests these reflections upon a past which neither the one nor the other is tempted to regret: "I have visited your *Solferino*. It is already an old tub; the new-fashioned wonders give me but little desire to recommence. After your career, which was so difficult and so complete, you come to seek, instead of the rest, the honor you have gained, labor and contempt in the Society. O my very dear commander! let us yet once more rejoice that God gives you intelligence of what so few men can understand."

In connection with Clerc's sojourn in Brest we had a glimpse of a midshipman whom he met at

the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul, and who, enlightened by his own secret similar aspirations, immediately discerned in Clerc the still hidden germ of the religious vocation.* At that time more fortunate than Clerc, less shackled by family circumstances, that midshipman was the first to put off the uniform; he entered the Society of Jesus while his friend was on the China expedition. But Clerc was not slow in rejoining him. Living under the same roof and eating at the same table, they together bore in Paris and Laval the amiable and sweet yoke of the Lord. Sometimes separated and sometimes united, according as obedience disposed of them for the greater glory of God, they ceased not to congratulate themselves upon having been faithful to the rendezvous in the army of the Lord they had given one another while they still belonged to the army of the world.

Has not the reader been struck as we were? From the humble and pious Joubert, who one day betook himself to Saint Sulpice and at twenty-nine years of age died a deacon, to the commander of the *Cassini*, how many graces of vocation fell around Clerc upon officers of all ranks!† It reminds us of what he used to say: "We are the children of saints, we Frenchmen especially, more

* Chapter iii. p. 86.

† Let us recall a few names: Commander Marceau, who wished to become a Marist; M. de Cuers, who died superior-general of the Priests of the Blessed Sacrament; M. de G——, that midshipman won by Father Clerc to the practice of his religion, and who writes to us from the Chartreuse of Reposoir. We might add the Abbé de Broglie, who was one of the officers of the *Solferino* at the same time with Commander de Plas.

truly, perhaps, than any other people of Christendom, and there are few among us who have not the blood of saints in their veins."

When the ardor of this generous blood is enkindled we are capable of all kinds of devotedness, of all sorts of heroism. If the laws, if the administrative customs of these days did not restrain the expansion of the Christian life, we should see on this fertile soil that has so many times been watered by the blood of martyrs, the grand monastic and chivalric vocations of the old ages of faith flourishing again under a new form. This would be the regeneration, better still, the resurrection, of France.

CHAPTER XIV.

FATHER CLERC AT SAINT VINCENT DE LAON AND IN THE AMBULANCE OF VAUGIRARD—HIS LAST VOWS.

FATHER CLERC was fifty years of age and fifteen of religious life when, in the month of October, 1869, his superiors sent him to the house of Saint Vincent at Laon to make that third probation which the Society of Jesus reserves for its children in the midst of their career, and by which it completes the formation in them of the interior man before admitting them to their last vows.

St. Ignatius placed our ideal high, and he has spared nothing to bring us as near to it as possible. That holy founder has been justly represented as "an artisan bending eagerly over his work to fashion and perfect it; examining it, then retouching and repolishing, and yielding it to its destination only when he has exhausted all the resources of a patient and laborious art." *

Behold, then, after long years consecrated partly to study and partly to teaching the divine and human sciences, the religious, already a priest and in his full maturity, called to a school still higher than those he has passed through—the school of

* Father de Ravignan on the "Existence and Institute of the Jesuits," chap. ii. § 3, "The Third Probation."

the heart (*schola affectus*). The word is charming, and it was invented by St. Ignatius himself, who had the bowels of a father as well as the genius of a legislator.

This *schola affectus* is, then, a new novitiate, or as well say a new childhood, by reason of its pupils' simplicity of heart and docility in allowing themselves to be guided; but also a manly and vigorous school that exacts of its disciples an active and spontaneous co-operation in the interior work of which their will is the indispensable instrument and their religious perfection the object.

On the threshold of this second novitiate there is again the long retreat, the "Spiritual Exercises" during thirty days. This time it is no more the milk of babes, but the bread of the strong. With what generosity Father Clerc entered on the way that was marked out for him! He was acquainted with it already, having for years diligently studied the "Exercises"; but he was cautious about directing himself and relying on his own prudence. The notes we have before us attest his eagerness to have recourse to the lights of the father instructor; they show us also his combats, his fidelity in struggling against desolation and dryness to the degree of doubling the hour of meditation, if it happened to him to experience only trouble and anxiety therein; and, finally, they reveal his extraordinary mortification, for which he obtained that year a latitude that had been refused him when he bore the fatigues of the professorship. He was allowed to take the discipline every day except Sundays

and festivals, and to fast three times a week. He would have liked to fast continually.

The reproaches he addresses himself (we will do well not to believe them literally deserved) betoken an ardent desire of attaining, with God's grace, the highest possible degree of purity of intention.

He asks himself if honors are an end worthy of him. "Honors?—Shall I labor to be praised, to have it said of me that I am skilful and intelligent, or some other flattering thing? What a recompense! *Vani vanam.* Those who are vain have received a vain reward. Henceforth I must not permit myself to be allured by the sweetness of praise. Contentment with self?—Still vainer and more dangerous. I have scarcely ever sought anything else. To find peace and interior joy in one's duty is good; but to seek our own satisfaction in our works is bad and illusive. Now, this is my case only too often, and, provided I have fulfilled my charge, I give little thought to God's service or my neighbor's welfare. What vanity, since such work is fruitless! I myself am its principle and its end; it is an occupation, not a work. It would be worse still to take delight in our virtue. Thank God, I do not think I am such a fool as that! I have so little material for illusion on that subject."

A little further on he says: "What profit have I derived from so much even painful labor? What! nothing else than being forgotten? Ah! my God, let not all of it perish. And what advantage has it been to others? How small and

rare are its fruits! Oh! if I had but vivified my activity by union with God, by prayer, by abnegation, and by making everything conduce to the glory of God!"

It is only saints who judge themselves thus. Has not the Holy Spirit said: "The just is first accuser of himself"? But he adds immediately: "His friend cometh and shall search him" (Prov. xviii. 17). We have, then, a right to examine the severe judgment our holy brother passed upon himself.

The ardor of his love for Jesus Christ bursts forth at these words of the holy old man Simeon: "*Quia viderunt oculi mei salutare tuum!*"—For my eyes have seen thy salvation. "I implore thee, O my God! command this light to shine upon my soul. Thou art the sun, thou art splendor; let thy radiance dazzle my eyes, so that henceforth they can see naught else; let every other love be extinguished, every desire stifled, every curiosity destroyed. What need has he to learn and know new things who knows eternal truth? What is there beautiful and seductive to him who has had a glimpse of thy beauty? A single ray of thy glory can effect all this in our souls. We can live afterwards, but we are as though dead; we see without seeing, we hear without hearing, or, better, we see and hear Jesus in all things and everywhere."

But now the light grows dim to his eyes. He listens, he hears nothing; none of those words in which are recognized the accents of the Beloved.

The following page, no lines of which I am willing to suppress, is the faithful picture of a soul burning with the desire of perfection, but at the same time humbly submissive to God, who is master of his gifts :

"I earnestly beg for a bright light by which to regulate the future, a profound sentiment of the desire of serving God by that means ; it seems to me I have done all that is possible to obtain it, that I have neglected absolutely nothing of what was prescribed, recommended, and of what I believed I could do on my side—fidelity, prayer, mortifications. I have omitted nothing, and yet I have not obtained that abundant grace. It is nevertheless according to Christian wisdom, since I ask only to know what God desires of me, and since it is with the most intense desire, and, I believe, with entire good will, that I say : *Quid me vis facere?*—What wilt thou have me to do ? (St. Paul's words at the moment of his conversion, Acts ix. 6). Moreover, that desire, good in itself, is likewise good for me, who would receive from it so powerful an excitation, so strong an impulse. Yes, Lord, I ask a grace of conversion that will make of me from this day a thoroughly new man.

"Perhaps the Lord answers me :

"'Is not the power of making the long retreat as well as thou couldst a great grace which I have given thee ? Is not this eager desire thou dost experience another ? *Qui biberit, sitiet adhuc*—Whosoever drinketh shall thirst again.

"'Thou wouldst be satisfied ; and dost thou not

know that that would be a misfortune? Dost thou not know what I ask of thee, and if thou knowest it why dost thou desire more light? I give thee the measure that is suitable for thee. I wish to see thee walking with the imperfect light which I communicate to thee; is faith, then, without obscurity? Is it less certain for being obscure?

"'Hast thou not to counsel and calm thee my servant, to whom I will that thou shouldst frankly open thy heart? Is it not more excellent for thee to be obliged to have recourse to him, than if thou shouldst walk in confidence? Wouldst thou not be exposed to walking very soon in confidence in thyself?

"'Is not this the regular and paternal order of my supernatural providence? and why demand a revelation which is not necessary?

"'Extraordinary graces would make thee vain, and the first answer to thy prayer is to correct thy self-love instead of giving it nourishment.

"'Besides, hast thou not strength sufficient to walk in the execution of thy resolutions?

"'They are good, wise, taken in the sincere intention of my service, and under my inspiration certain though concealed; canst thou doubt that I will aid thee to accomplish them?

"'Thou dost hope much from a great movement of love which I might give thee. In the first place that movement would be fleeting, and in the second place it would leave thee still in need of my continual help.

"'This help, which would always be necessary

to thee, shall always be sufficient; I will always give it to thee.

"'Thou wishest to feel it; but dost thou feel the help by which I sustain all thy faculties, thy whole being, by which I concur in all thy acts? Such is my conduct—very strong and very gentle, as well in the order of grace as in the order of nature.

"'Moreover, is not the state thy soul has been in for twenty-five days a grace thou canst easily enough authenticate? Is it a doubtful sign of my assistance?

"'Thou wouldst like more; but when I should have given thee more, wouldst thou not want still more? Since thou knowest that thou dost act with me and by me in thy resolutions, that should suffice thee, and thou shouldst blindly confide thyself to my love (it shall be done).

"'What more beautiful device could I give thee than '*Pro corde meo, per ipsum cor meum, et cum ipso, et in ipso*'—'For my heart, by my heart, with it and in it'?

"'Thy desire pleases me. Pray earnestly to my Heart, to that of my Mother, and leave me to answer thy prayer in my own good time.'"

"All for the Heart of Jesus, by that Heart, with it and it it"—such, then, was Father Clerc's watchword on coming out of his long retreat. Finding himself in the *school of the heart*, it was not a bad inspiration for him to take for master, model, and support, the Heart of his God. November 25 he pronounced in the hands of the father instructor

an Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus,* "for which I rejoice in the Lord," he wrote, "giving thanks a thousand times to the goodness of God and to the tenderness of the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ." He places his resolutions under the auspices of that adorable Heart, and they consist in nothing less than that perfect abnegation which sums up the whole science of the saints, and which St. Ignatius entitles *the third degree of humility.* "In this matter," he wrote, "there can be no deliberation about what is necessary; we must strongly resolve, and then execute, cost what it may. Now, this necessity is found for me in the third degree of humility and in the eleventh rule of the Summary,† and I desire to have it always present to my mind." As to the motives of his consecration to the Sacred Heart, I confine myself to this one: "I believe that this devotion gives a right to an immediate effusion of the Sacred Heart of our Lord into our hearts."

Fifteen years before, when making at Saint Acheul his first long retreat, he had taken these same generous resolutions. It is his merit and his honor to have renewed them with a thorough knowledge of all they comprehend, and with a sincerity that shows especially in the means by which he ensures their execution.

It is easy to imagine how he passed that year

*See Appendix.

†In the "Third Degree of Humility" and the "Eleventh Rule of the Summary" St. Ignatius inculcates the doctrine of desiring and asking for humiliations for the sake of imitating our Lord.—*Note of Translator.*

devoted entirely to the exercises of the interior life, and to works in which zeal displays itself only under the humblest forms. The father instructor admired his docility, rendered more meritorious by his age. He writes us: "He was always found ready not only to execute the commands given him, but to anticipate the wishes of those who held the place of God in his regard." As to his brethren, they were at once edified and charmed, and that virtue, so austere in its foundations, left the pleasantest impression upon them all. One of them writes us: "It was my privilege to spend with him the year which preceded his glorious death, the good year of the third probation. Nobody appreciated better than he that favor which the Society grants its children. Twenty times was he heard congratulating himself on the fact that *an old man like him* could enjoy such a year. He was a model for each one of us. Notwithstanding his fifty years of age, he had all the simplicity, I will add, even the graces and amiability, of the religious childhood. He would ask like a child all the little permissions prescribed by the rule. To him they were none of them little. He knew, he had a presentiment, perhaps, that by a continual abnegation in little things he was preparing himself for the greatest—for the apostolate, for martyrdom. He was always ready for any service, and he seemed to take pleasure in charging himself with some extra employment or some disagreeable task. Of a lively imagination and a sprightly disposition, he was a very delightful talker, and his narratives were en-

chanting. I think no one ever tired of his conversation, which united the useful and the agreeable. His information was extremely varied, and he joined to a great deal of wit an exquisite good sense which enabled him to form a just appreciation of things. Need we add that during the hours of recreation and promenade all were glad to be near him? Full of charity for persons, he had no toleration for error, which he had the gift of discovering under no matter what disguise. The rectitude of his judgment made him abhor as by instinct that mixture of principles called *liberal Catholicism*, and more than once I have heard him stigmatize that deplorable system of conciliation as energetically as has since our Holy Father Pope Pius IX., in saying that it is a *veritable scourge.*"

In the house of St. Vincent they occupied themselves but little with politics, and they had only a very vague knowledge of what was transpiring in the exterior world. Still, they could not be ignorant of the commotion excited by the Council of the Vatican; and in the anticipation of an approaching struggle between the Revolution and the Church they could not be sure of the part that would be taken by the imperial government, jealous of reviving its prestige even at the price of the most compromising alliances. But they were very few who saw therein a peril and menace to the peace of Europe. We remember how in the month of April, 1870, under the liberal and pacific ministry of M. Emile Ollivier, all was *couleur de rose;* and who then thought of the black clouds that

were seen in the horizon on the morrow of Sadowa ? Father Clerc did not share the general illusion ; he foresaw the approaching tempest, and from that moment predicted it. One of his old comrades having come to St. Vincent to see him, they spoke of the different careers which young men might enter. The father pronounced in favor of the military career, and as his friend did not immediately agree with him, he said : "There is going to be a general breaking up, when and how I know not, but certainly there will be one before long." Upon which his interlocutor adds : "Without having much faith in the then existing order of things, I did not suppose I was listening to a prophecy that would so soon be verified."

Four months after this conversation we were not only in full tide of war, but in full tide of *breaking up,* and beaten blow after blow at Wissembourg and at Reichshoffen while awaiting the catastrophe of Sedan. Under such circumstances Father Clerc's place was at the camps or in the ambulances ; he was first sent to Cherbourg to prepare the sailors for the struggle by reconciling them to God ; after which he was assigned his post of devotedness and peril in the ambulance of the college of Vaugirard, and he did not leave it during the entire siege. He was there joined by his old commander, now Father De Plas, and both reaped in the exercise of charity what they had together sown in their Chinese expedition.

Father Clerc directed the ambulance, and he profited by his position to make himself the servant

of all and to secure a large share of the roughest and most mortifying hospital employments. Then was seen what treasures of abnegation he had amassed during the course of his religious life. I speak from the testimony of ocular witnesses, who, without any intention of watching, did not lose sight of him, and still preserve the impression of the admirable example he daily gave them.

His daily regulation was as follows: At half-past five he ascended to the altar and celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and after his thanksgiving went down to the ambulance, where he commenced by reciting his breviary. That done, he belonged entirely to his dear wounded soldiers. He first visited the most suffering, consoled them, distributed little comforts—in a word, rendered them all the services the tenderest charity could suggest. Then he pursued his visits, going from bed to bed, addressing a kind good-morning to each, informing himself of the needs of the body as well as of the soul, always ready to satisfy both.

The hour of repast being come, he recited the *Benedicite*, to which the patients responded. After this he put on an apron, joined the servants, and distributed the vegetables, soup, etc.; then, as a tender mother would have done for her child, he assisted those to eat whose wounds prevented them from using their limbs.

When he had himself taken his meal he almost always came to the ambulance to pass his recreation, to the great delight of the invalids.

The afternoon was a repetition of the morning;

and this routine, so cruel to nature, was renewed every day, unless after some engagement the father judged his presence more useful outside than in the ambulance. Then he went to the scene of action to administer the sacraments to the dying, and to relieve and encourage the wounded who were awaiting the college omnibus. He was seen at Champigny and at Bagneux exposing himself to a lively fire without showing the least sign of nervousness. At Bagneux the fighting was in the village itself. When the omnibus returned for the second time it did not bring back Father Clerc. Very uneasy, the father rector has himself conducted immediately to the place where Father Clerc disappeared, and this at the risk of falling in the midst of the enemy, who have, it is said, retaken the village that was carried in the morning by the French, who now fight while retreating.

They arrive ; they anxiously hurry over the still smoking battle-field. What is not the surprise and joy of father rector and his companions when, after a quarter of an hour's search, they find Father Clerc seated on a rock and reciting his breviary as tranquilly as if in his own room !

When the wounded arrived at the ambulance, he himself stanched the blood that flowed from their wounds, and with a sponge bathed their lacerated and blood-stained members. He also washed their feet, happy to imitate in that his Divine Master, not by a mere ceremony, but by repeated acts in which humility and charity had for their inseparable companion a most meritorious mortification.

He changed their linen and bandages, spared no pains to procure them some alleviation, and with his own hands several times a day dressed the most repulsive sores.

How touched those poor fellows were! It would have needed a heart of bronze to resist so much charity; and, thank God! our soldiers are not so constructed. We are told of one of them, Renaudin, a native of Paris, and a blacksmith by trade: After only fifteen days of service he had his thigh fractured at Champigny, and was left seven or eight hours moaning on the battle-field. Father Clerc took a special interest in him and induced him to approach the sacraments several times. There was no service too abject for him to render this poor boy. "You do not know," the latter said one day to another father—"you do not know how good Father Clerc is. He has done for me what my own father would never have done." Emotion overcame him. He could not continue his meal, and not knowing how to express himself, he repeated, weeping: "If you knew how I love him!" A few days afterwards he died in the best of dispositions.

Father Clerc confessed, almost unaided, the two hundred patients of the ambulance. On Saturdays and the vigils of feasts, he exhorted them to perform their Christian duties, and one by one they were seen going to kneel at his feet, where they received pardon. On Sundays, attentive to having them hear Mass, he so arranged as to make it easy, and even pleasant, for them. In

the midst of so many gloomy days came Christmas eve, and all of a sudden it grew luminous in the college chapel with a light which had seemed to have for ever disappeared, and which was the sweetest of surprises to the poor victims of the furies of war. Thanks to the co-operation of a certain number of pupils who still frequented the school as day scholars, and for whom care had been taken to prepare beds, the Midnight Mass was celebrated with a solemnity modified, it is true, but very unexpected under these sad circumstances; and singing, accompanied by organ, violoncello, and flute, was heard during the sacred rite. Besides the kind friends whose ingenious charity multiplied the resources and almost the pleasures of the ambulance, there were noticed among the worshippers Admiral de Montaignac, who commanded the fourth division and had his headquarters in the college, the son of the admiral, and several officers of his staff. At the moment of Communion the pupils, through a delicate sentiment, spontaneously gave place to the soldiers who had had the honor of shedding their blood for France. It was not without emotion that they saw Father Clerc supporting to the communion rail two young men of eighteen years of age, who, much weakened by their wounds, walked one on each side of him, leaning on his arm. The other patients, retained by the gravity of their illness upon beds of suffering, were not deprived of the heavenly food; they could not come to kneel at the foot of the altar, but our Lord went to them, preceded by the long

procession of their comrades carrying lighted candles as they marched in good order in two straight lines; and when the touching and pious ceremony was over, all those hearts of youth and of soldiers were but one, and nothing was wanting to the miraculous serenity of that night, when the peace of heaven was given once more to men of good will.

Such are the souvenirs of the ambulance of Vaugirard. We are further told that, in spite of the extraordinary cold of that cruel winter, Father Clerc would never kindle a fire in his room; that during the entire siege he gave himself not a day nor an hour of respite, never going out excepting to carry assistance to the dying and the wounded. These details, certainly very incomplete, do not the less give us an idea of an uncommon virtue, and those who furnished them were careful to add: "Having no suspicion that he was an elect of the Lord for martyrdom, we did not pay any very great attention to his actions, which were always full of abnegation; and then he was so humble that he always found means to have them pass unperceived." Was it not precisely this which rendered them more holy and more precious in God's sight?

He left the ambulance of Vaugirard only to go to the School Saint-Genevieve to prepare himself by an eight days' retreat for pronouncing his last vows, the date of which ceremony was fixed for the 1st of March.

This was his last retreat. After the wave of the Commune had passed, we found in his room which

for two months had been occupied by the Federates, some sheets of paper disdained by them, and still bearing the imprint of their heels, on which our beloved brother had written his thoughts and resolutions up to the eve of his solemn profession.

What humility in the reproaches he addresses himself regarding the six months that have just elapsed, and during which he was the admiration of those who saw him daily at his work! "Why," he says, "did I not regulate and arrange my life better while I was employed in the ambulance? . . . How changeable I have been! how inconsistent! What a way to keep my resolutions of the Third Year! Truly I am ashamed and almost surprised."

Then, alluding to a conversation with Father Ducoudray, who seconds his love of humiliation and confirms him in the lowly opinion he has of himself: "The disorder of my actions is not, as good father rector says, *lack of order*. On the contrary, all in my life has its order, its place, hours, means. Everything is foreseen and ordered by the rules, the employment, the superior, or election; when all that is accounted for there remains very little else. Mine is not the insubordination and want of discipline of a troop of mobiles; it is the insubordination and irregularity of a trained army, and disorder is introduced into my life not through want of rule or of knowledge, but by weariness of restraint, and by the indifference and inattention of the heads—that is, of my will." Fortunately we know that on such subjects he must not be taken at his word.

I will copy the last page inspired by the meditation of the *Two Standards* :

"Our Lord presents us his cross, saying : *In hoc signo vinces*—Under this standard thou shalt conquer. We may imagine him discoursing with us :

"'That contempt which thou dost hold in such horror, hast thou not merited it by thy sins? And when thou didst offer to suffer everything to expiate them, didst thou except the shame which is their just wages?

"'What is due thee for thy bad inclinations, for thy weaknesses and relaxations? Where are thy merits and thy virtues, thy services, thy great deeds? Wilt thou not that all justice be accomplished? Dost thou not need to be thus kept in thy place and is it not necessary to master thy vanity and pride?

"'Must thou not abase thyself before God? And this is what thou dost in abasing thyself before the outrage he sends thee by men. Dost thou not desire to render him a worship worthy of him? Do something great for his honor. Wilt thou not imitate me? It is my voice that urges thee, it is my hand that presents thee the cross; I have borne it before thee, and I did so to encourage thee and show thee an example. I give it to thee; as it is my triumph and my glory, it will also be thine. And as it is the pledge of my love for thee, it will be the pledge of thy love for me.'

"*O crux! O bona crux!*" *

* This is the salutation the Apostle St. Andrew addressed to the cross upon which he was about to die. Father Clerc will repeat these words at Mazas in saluting the walls of his cell.

Animated with these sentiments of profound humility and of passionate love for Jesus crucified, he made his solemn profession on Sunday, the 19th of March and the feast of St. Joseph, in the hands of Father Ducoudray, rector of the School Sainte-Genevieve, whose blood was to mingle with his in the immolation of the 24th of May.

The Commune was already on foot. The pious friends who took part in that private festival celebrated on the morning of Sunday, had some difficulty in regaining their residence through the barricades erected on the sides of the hill Sainte-Genevieve to cut off the approaches of the Pantheon to the regular troops. The evening before, the assassins of Generals Lecomte and Clement Thomas had preluded in the Rue des Rosiers the summary executions of La Roquette and the Rue Haxo.

Notwithstanding the excitement in the streets and each day's uncertainty of the morrow, the fervent religious set himself to work to prepare the course of special mathematics with which he had been charged. After various arrangements, which came to naught, it was decided that the opening of the classes prevented by the insurrection should take place April 12, in the country house of Athis. Father Clerc, who remained in Paris until he should be needed, argued ill from what he saw around him: the lack of discipline of the troops, of which he had been so often a witness during the siege; the weakness of the government that at such a moment *doubted its own right;* the demoralization, the want of harmony and of conviction and

energy among upright men, all saddened him profoundly, and he was among those who were not deceived about the gravity of the evil which was upon us long before it burst out in the disorganization of the public authority. He was sometimes heard to say: "*Moriamur in simplicitate nostra*—Let us die in our simplicity. . . . There is nothing left but to die; there is no longer any room for honest people here below." The playful tone in which he spoke these words in nowise concealed their bitterness.

Towards the end of the month a devoted lady, who had been unable to assist at the ceremony of the 19th, came to pay him a visit of apology and politeness. As she had had to cross several barricades to reach the house, she asked him: "Father, do you not fear for your houses and your persons in Paris?" "Yes, indeed, madame," he replied; "I fear as much more as Paris is more guilty; it needs to be purified by blood. . . . Almighty God should take the blood of forty of us."

He did not bargain, as is plain to see, and he supposed that others had the same ardor for sacrifice with which he was burning. Perhaps God took only choice victims, so as to reduce the number without diminishing the value of the holocaust. Who knows? . . .

"Two days before his imprisonment," says one of his colleagues of the School Sainte-Genevieve, "I was struck by his persistence in keeping in his room, and my impression was that foreseeing his life was in danger, he congratulated himself on

having it to offer to God. I begged him to take precautions; his reply gave me reason to believe that he desired to make the sacrifice of his life."

In fact, he had always had that desire, perhaps even with the presentiment of the kind of death that was reserved for him.

Enumerating all that we ought to cheerfully accept in order to correspond to the genuine military spirit of the Society of Jesus, he wrote:

"A dangerous post . . . wearisome—brilliant . . . obscure—bullets . . . sickness."

And he was persuaded that God would spare him the trial of sickness.

There remained, then, the bullets. But at the moment when he threw those words on paper (November, 1869) who could have anticipated the Commune of 1871 and the fusillade of La Roquette?

CHAPTER XV.

FATHER CLERC PRISONER AND VICTIM FOR LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST—MAZAS—LA ROQUETTE.

We have now reached the part of this cherished and sacred task where we have before us a guide whose authority is great, and whom we shall follow step by step. Who is not acquainted with the "Acts of the Captivity and Death of Fathers Olivaint, Ducoudray, Caubert, Clerc, and De Bengy," by Father Armand de Ponlevoy? One cannot read those truthful pages, written by the sympathetic witness of a bloody immolation, without thinking of the era of the persecutions and of the catacombs. There are found the most of the letters Father Clerc wrote in the confinement of the Conciergerie and Mazas; I shall only need to reproduce them. Still, having to occupy himself with the five hostages at once, Father de Ponlevoy has neglected several documents of real interest, but which would have made his remarkably clear narration too complicated. So he has left me something to glean. I gladly gather up a few ears, which will not be the least ornament of my sheaf.

Father de Ponlevoy observed everything from Versailles, where the unanimous advice of his consulters had fixed him so that he might continue to

correspond with all the religious of whom he was superior. It was to Versailles that Fathers Olivaint and Ducoudray, and the other hostages, wrote to him from their prison. He replied, but his letters never reached them. What he suffered during that time is unutterable. The wounds of his heart bled for three years longer, and then he died, a victim of his boundless devotedness and his paternal anguish, alas! too often renewed.

Here, in all their simplicity, are the incidents just as he presents them in the "Acts." I abridge his recital:

After twelve o'clock on the night of the Monday in Holy Week, that is, in the first hour of Holy Tuesday, April 4, the School Sainte-Genevieve is completely surrounded by a battalion of National Guards armed to the teeth. They knock with redoubled blows at the door of No. 18. The brother porter gets up and says that he will go for the keys, deposited, as customary, in the father rector's room; the door will then be opened in a moment. That moment appears long to our braves; the bugle sounds three times by way of summons, and a general discharge upon all the windows alarms the neighborhood. Father Ducoudray very soon understood that all protest was useless; his perfectly cool and dignified manner caused those miscreants to exclaim: "What a man! and what energy of character!" During the night the house was thoroughly ransacked. They pretended they were searching for arms; they found none. Their especial desire was the cash-box; it had been drain-

ed by the expenses of the siege. Then they set about securing persons whom they retained as hostages; and that was the recompense of the care bestowed for six months on the wounded in the ambulance of the school.

At five o'clock the bugle gives the signal of departure for the Prefecture of Police, and the prisoners file off between two lines of National Guards. At their head and a little distance from the others walks the father rector; then follow Fathers Ferdinand Billot,* Emile Chauveau, Alexis Clerc, Anatole de Bengy, Jean Bellanger, Théodore de Regnon, and Jean Tanguy, and Brothers Benoît Darras, Gabriel Dedébat, René Piton, Pierre Le Falher, and seven domestics. On the top of the bridge Saint Michel, near the entrance to the city, Father Ducoudray turns, and with a radiant look says to Father Chauveau, who is nearest to him: "Ah! well, *Ibant gaudentes;* is it not so?" "What did he say to you?" the uneasy guards ask Father Chauveau. The latter repeats the suspected phrase. "God knows how much the guards understood of it," adds the historian. True imitators of the apostles, *they indeed went . . . re-*

* Father Billot has just been taken from the School Sainte-Genevieve after more than twenty years of professorship. He is a great loss. He was highly esteemed by the illustrious Cauchy, his first teacher, who even thought of bequeathing him his unpublished works, some of which needed a continuator rather than an editor. Endowed with superior penetration and possessing extensive learning of more than one sort, he could with honor have filled a chair of theology. He carries with him the regrets of a crowd of young men whose hearts he won by his gentle virtue, while by his devotedness he facilitated their admission to the Polytechnic School.

joicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus" (Acts v. 41).

Arrived at the Prefecture of Police, the bugles sound loudly to announce the success of the expedition and the rich prize that has been secured. I spare the reader the gross abuse that welcomes the captives, and the hasty interrogatory to which Father Ducoudray is put. The father rector is shut up alone in a cell of the Conciergerie; the others are led to the Prison du Dépôt, and crowded with thirty men into a large room used hitherto for the disreputable women the police pick up at night in the gutters of the capital.

When he found himself thus separated from the rest, Father Ducoudray, through religious spirit and love of the common life, asked and obtained the privilege of having at least one of his brethren for a companion. He named Father Alexis Clerc, who gladly responded to that call which summoned him to death. As soon as they were together they organized a little supply service in favor of their brothers, deprived like themselves of the most necessary articles, and each of them despatched notes, which reached their destination, and on which may still be seen the stamp and endorsement of the prison officers. Father Clerc wrote to his ever-devoted brother, and was not long in receiving, according to his request, towels, handkerchiefs, and wrought-iron spoons, the apparition of all which caused a sudden flash of joy in the common hall. "Cleanliness being a great consolation to a prisoner," Father Clerc hastened to thank his sister-

in-law, who in the absence of her husband had provided everything; his religious brethren blessed the attentive charity which procured them those humble gifts and doubled their value.

"A jailor of the Dépôt of the Prefecture, charged with visiting the two recluses in their common cell, gave these details of how they lived together: 'They want for nothing, are gay and appear very happy, and pray together almost continually.' Father Ducoudray had frequently expressed this wish to one of his most intimate confidants: 'Ah! if you and I could ascend some mountain with our crucifix, we would know how to pray to God!' The wish was granted."*

But that prison was too good for our dear captives, who were able therein to still find a reflection of the religious life and to breathe the perfume of fraternal charity; consequently they only passed through it. Thursday evening, April 6, a prison carriage, divided into compartments carefully closed and separated one from another, bore them and his Grace the Archbishop of Paris and President Bonjean from the Conciergerie to Mazas. Father de Bengy, brought from the common hall, was also a part of the load, and a cell awaited him in the prison of Mazas. Later (April 13) the same prison received Father Olivaint and Father Caubert, arrested in our house of the Rue de Sèvres on the evening of April 4. April 18 two other Jesuits

* "Acts of the Captivity and Death of the Rev. Frs. P. Olivaint, L. Ducoudray, J. Caubert, A. Clerc, and A. de Bengy," by Fr. A. de Ponlevoy, eleventh edition, page 58. Our references are always to this edition.

were likewise confined at Mazas, but they escaped death. As to the sixteen inmates of the School Sainte-Genevieve, fathers, brothers, and servants, who were left in the common hall of the Conciergerie, for some time their fate was uncertain. Then there was a moment of indulgence at the Hôtel de Ville, under the influence of which they were released, April 12, after nine days of imprisonment.

Behold, then, Father Clerc entirely separated from his brethren and shut up in his narrow cell of the prison of Mazas! Assuredly the habitation is not a cheerful one. It begins to be pretty well known, so many honest people had, thanks to the Commune, leisure to make a personal study of it, and have since published exact descriptions. It is certain, however, that our dear prisoner did not there lose the joy of his soul; on the contrary, he experienced an unutterable dilatation of heart. He saw our Lord's cross glowing upon those naked and cold walls, and he cried out as he entered, *O bona Crux!*

Then he remembered that there, as well as in his cell of the Rue Lhomond, he had his duty to fulfil. He was professor of special mathematics, and the classes were to be reopened at the country house of Athis. Will he ever rejoin them? It is very doubtful; but no matter, his duty for the moment is to prepare his course, and forthwith he sets himself to the work. In the first letter he addresses to his brother Jules he asks not only for a Bible and a breviary, but also for books of analytic geo-

metry, and asks for them with an earnestness as much more meritorious as those subjects with which he has been surfeited have now less attraction for him. One of his religious brothers, who knew him well, has gone so far as to say that that anticipatory preparation of his classes in his cell at Mazas was neither more nor less than a heroic act. "I am in good health," he remarks in concluding his letter, "am quite contented, and, with those books, shall indefinitely bid defiance to the *ennui* which has not yet presented itself." Imagine, if you can, a man more easily contented.

The feast of Easter (April 9) comes, and the poor prisoner's most sensible privations are not those confinement inflicts upon nature. But the "Alleluia" which sings Christ's victory over death does not the less resound in the depths of his heart, and, borrowing the language of the martyrology for the day, he writes to his beloved brother :

"My Dear Jules : *To-day is the feast of feasts, the Christian Passover, the day the Lord has made!* For us there was neither Mass to say nor to hear, but there was joy and peace in the Lord.

"As the good things you have sent are much more plentiful than I need, your intention of coming to the assistance of my companions in captivity is manifest to me, and, if I am happy to express my gratitude for your fraternal friendship, I am far more so to thank you for your charity; it is the most excellent of all the virtues, and the one which will be replaced by nothing more excellent even in heaven. Therefore I not only thank you,

but I congratulate you, because I know that God will not leave you without a reward for your zeal in providing for the wants of those who suffer for his name.

"It is to me a new and lively consolation to see you associated with our tribulation. I am not only happy and proud of it on my own account, but also on yours; and I hope that it is for you and your family the first of a series of graces more abundant than ever, which God will bestow upon you.

"Do not worry about me any longer; place your family in safety—that is the most urgent duty. Besides, I have no want to make known to you. I have sufficient linen, and I have money to procure me food.

"This morning I was ready to take my breakfast; your packages arrived just in time; I did honor to all of them. That opportune conjuncture is one of the thousand delicacies of the providence of our Father who is in Heaven. May he be blessed for it, and may the instrument he has chosen as the channel of his benefits to me be likewise blessed! I am unwilling to ask of the prefecture permission to take books to my cell, not through fear of a refusal, nor to spare myself the trouble of being grateful, but for better and higher reasons. Besides, with the Bible I have the wherewithal to nourish my soul for a longer time than I shall be in prison, even though I should stay till I die of old age. I hope that Charles, who teaches me to meet misfortune patiently, will at last learn of me to bear it with our Lord; he

would then find the secret of suffering joyfully and with fruit." *

After this letter there is a long silence, and it is not till fifteen days later (Saturday, April 22) that Father Clerc succeeds in having the following lines reach his brother. They issue from a prison silent as the tomb, and whose echoes are awakened only by the cannonade: "The cannon are heard thundering night and day; so the forts are being disputed, and we, after the Prussians, are besieging Paris; but the Prussians would have had to work a good while yet to take it by main force. I conclude from this—and you see that my sources of information are not numerous—I conclude, nevertheless, that the siege and my detention will not finish to-morrow. I have amusement for some days still in the book you gave me, but I would like to have another."

Here follows a new request for mathematical works. But these will not suffice to fill up the leisure that may yet be prolonged several weeks. "If you can get me the 'Theological Summa of St. Thomas,'" he adds, "I shall be supplied for a long time." So in his prison he means to resume his habits of labor, and renew that assiduous intercourse with St. Thomas which, in his life as an officer, even distant expeditions did not interrupt. The letter concludes with these words:

* Mr. Charles Clerc is an elder brother, who has spent a great part of his life in England, and with whom our readers have not yet had the opportunity of becoming acquainted. We are happy to here offer him the homage of our respectful sympathy.

"Have you not answered me? Has your reply to my last letter not been given me? I know nothing about it. They talk of the cloister of convents of nuns; this of Mazas is not to be disdained.

"I beg you not to compromise yourself in anything for me; what I ask you for is of abundance and not of necessity. So do not go and get yourself incarcerated for the sake of helping me; that would serve nobody, and you are not as well situated as I am to take it patiently."

April 25 he writes again in a tone of affectionate reproach: "You might perhaps not leave me in such ignorance. You should not conspire with the whole system of prison cells to preserve silence around me. Since I know absolutely nothing of what is going on outside, it is impossible for me to know less; and though one of your letters should not reach me, or should be mutilated, it would still inform me of as much as if you had written nothing in it.

"For instance, I would like to know if our companions of the Conciergerie have been released; if other fathers have been arrested and their houses pillaged; if our Preparatory School has opened somewhere; if the little boys are still at the college. And I do not think I will be prevented from learning this. It is what interests me most.

"Perhaps also you may be able to learn if it is a determined thing that, contrary to the usage of the prison, we are to see nobody, and finally if they think of taking any steps against us."

Insisting upon his requests for books—requests prompted by the rather long period that probably remains for him to spend in solitude—he says: "The 'Summa' of St. Thomas is a book which you will have to borrow—in ordinary times I could easily tell you where, but now I do not know. Every priest who is a little learned or studious certainly has it in his library. Every library that is not exclusively frivolous contains it likewise, and a librarian who is a little obliging would lend it to you for a poor prisoner.

"I am in want of nothing, unless it be that, the prison regulations no longer allowing a chaplain, we have neither Mass nor sacraments. I am sure prisoners never desired them so much.

"I pray to God, I study, I read, I write a little, and I find that time passes quickly even at Mazas.

"There truly are such things as presentiments; I believe I never travelled on the Vincennes railroad without looking at this prison and saying to myself that perhaps I would be its inmate some day. When the Prison de la Santé was building, I made a careful visit of it, and had the same idea constantly in my mind. But, not to exaggerate my presentiments, I should add that I imagined my incarceration would be brought about by the regular and official means of a certain Monsieur Bonjean, a magistrate of the old Parliaments, while the fact is that that same poor Monsieur Bonjean is less astonished to find himself in prison than to be there with the Jesuits. O Fortune! I may also say, O Commune! behold thy freaks."

In truth the meeting was a singular one, and M. Bonjean had doubtless no more anticipated it than Father Clerc. And at La Roquette how much cause that magistrate had to congratulate himself upon a proximity which permitted him to open his soul to the very Jesuit who, with good reason, was astonished at having him for a companion in captivity!

Father Clerc soon received the details he was anxious for regarding the fate of his *confrères* and of the Jesuit establishments; and amidst so much bitterness he experienced some consolation in learning that the educational works which were particularly dear to him were being continued as completely as possible, in spite of the horrible struggle that was plunging Paris in fire and blood. The pupils of the School Sainte-Genevieve were reassembled at Athis, those of Vaugirard at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, and his brother Jules had a hand in the latter installation. Thanks to a species of salvage organized through his efforts, the fathers were able to remove from the College of Vaugirard, as from a vessel stranded on the coast, a portion of the school properties they had the most need of at Saint-Germain, and which otherwise would have been the prey of the Commune. The two nephews of the prisoner of Mazas, Alexis and Henri Clerc, young pupils of Vaugirard, continued their studies at Saint-Germain, where they soon received the most touching tokens of their uncle's affection.

"Well and good," he replies, after having re-

ceived this news (letter of April 23); "that is the way to write. In two words you inform me of everything that most interests me. Now my ignorance of all that is transpiring is much less painful.

"Take no more steps to see me, for I fear these will draw something disagreeable upon you, and I have no hope of their being successful. This door will be opened by a hand other than yours, and if it does not open at all we shall know how to resign ourselves.

"You will cheerfully accept the compliments which are paid you for me. I am happy and proud to suffer something for the name I bear. You are sufficiently aware that the blow did not surprise me, that I did not seek to avoid it, and that I desire to support it.

"I do not hope for the deliverance of which you speak, and I do not know that we need apprehend anything from fear, anger, or their necessity of further committing themselves. The less I am master of myself, the more I am in the hands of God; what he decrees will come to pass, and he will enable me to do what he wills that I should. *Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat*—I can do all things in Him who strengthens me."

Eight days later he at last received a visit from his brother. Jules did not come alone; a courageous woman, who had already given proof of devotedness at the ambulance of Vaugirard, having obtained a permit to see the prisoner through the grates of Mazas, had brought Mr. Jules Clerc as an escort.

The conversation was as gay as it could have been in the parlor of Vaugirard or of the School Sainte-Genevieve. It was marked by an incident which, to borrow the expression of Father de Ponlevoy, did not lack a chivalric stamp. The interview having been procured, by grace of nepotism, through the credit of a high dignitary of the Commune, Father Clerc was told that that powerful personage would deign to come himself to Mazas to propose to Father Clerc to include him in a negotiation of exchange of prisoners. "But at the mere idea of such a treaty the former naval officer, who was a judge of honor, sprang from his chair. 'Be calm, we beg you,' the visitors said to him, 'and especially if the offer is made you do not compromise yourself; some misfortune will befall you if you do.' 'What misfortune? What have I to fear? We cannot be worse off than at the Conciergerie and at Mazas.' 'I beg your pardon, father, I beg your pardon. . . . You mistake; worse can befall you.' 'Ah!' he cried with a start, 'then we should be shot! What good fortune! . . . Straight to Paradise!' And he looked radiant, with his arms extended and his eyes raised to heaven."

He was delighted to learn that the establishments of the Rue Lhomond and the Rue Vaugirard were successfully reorganized at Athis and Saint-Germain, and that the Commune had released, among others, two of his confrères who were absolutely necessary for the *special courses* which, he thought, could very well do without him for sometime yet.

The next day he wrote to his brother: "I am truly joyful since yesterday. The news you brought me was so good, and the evil might be much greater. The upshot of the matter is our works are impeded, but we shall not be altogether prevented from continuing them. Yet what gives me the most pleasure is to see you rendering service to M. Gravoueille,* and you understand that, while perfectly appreciating the service itself, what especially touches me is the excellence of the good work you thus do. Our Lord always rewards what is done for him; he is generous enough not to allow himself to be exceeded in generosity by any one. I am proud of you.

"I told you that they let us have the newspapers.† I have read three, have written I don't know how many letters, and have not opened a mathematical book to-day. What dissipation!"

This letter bears the date of May 5. On the 6th, before sending it, he adds these lines, which prove how little he cherished illusions: "They are filling up their prison. I believe the hour of their most evil counsels will be the hour of their greatest reverses."

He did not fail to discharge his debt of gratitude towards the devoted woman who had surmounted so many obstacles in order to visit him and afford him the pleasue of his brother's visit.

* The Rev. Father Gravoueille, rector of the College of Vaugirard.

† This relaxation of the prison discipline was probably due to the same influence which procured for Father Clerc the visit of his brother and the person mentioned in connection with it.

"It is not enough," he wrote to her, "to have thanked you once; I owe you too much, and I wish to thank you again.

"To do so I will tell you of the joy your unexpected visit gave me. I supposed you were in the country, and meanwhile you returned to Paris. Thrusting yourself into the jaws of the wolf, you forced the gates of this impenetrable prison. Be very sure that I can form some estimate of all it must have cost you, of all the weariness and fatigue of such efforts, and of the multiplied journeys to Versailles, to Paris, and to Saint-Germain. But charity, says St. Paul, 'is kind, seeketh not her own, hopeth all things, and endureth all things.' Consequently it overcomes all obstacles. It was you, then, who were to break down this barrier that stood firm in spite of all my brother's efforts for a month—for I had been in prison just one month when I had the pleasure of seeing you. This was right: charity, which is better, should be mightier than fraternal friendship. What an attention on your part, and what trouble you took to hunt up my brother and wait for him that you might bring him to me.

"Remark how God commences in this world to justify his providence, and ask yourself if the horrors of these days have not a reason for being, in that they call forth such amiable and delicate devotedness.

"I must tell you once again what a consolation it was, after this month of absolute separation, and of hearing incessantly night and day the thunder

of cannon—what a consolation it was to see beloved friends and to learn news of such interest. Moreover, all the news you brought me was good. The blows that have struck us have only partially injured us; our colleges are hardly incommoded by them; while a few of us, suffering for the name of Jesus, will render the labors of the rest more efficacious and more fruitful.

"So I have brought back into my cell a very joyous heart. The mortification of the solitary life is but a little thing to a man accustomed to silence and study, and whose life has been mostly passed in his religious cell. But ignorance regarding such great interests is very painful, and all possible resignation to the will of God neither can nor ought to make us indifferent to them.

"What, then, shall I do to show you some gratitude? I will continue my office towards you, to excite you to fidelity to your resolutions, and especially to bring you ever nearer to our Lord, not only spiritually by prayer and the practice of all your duties, as well as by your works of charity, but to draw you closer to him corporally by the Holy Communion. Here there is no confession, no Mass even on Sundays. We are lodged, fed; that is enough for animals. Profit by the sacraments which are offered you.

"Can you explain to me why we who are capable, and so readily capable, of generous and affectionate sentiments, are so cold towards our Lord? Has he not the most generous, the most delicate, and the tenderest of hearts? There is nothing of

good in any man which is not far more excellent in him. We must love him with all our strength."

At the same time he writes to Father Chauveau, who he knows now is at liberty and engaged in procuring for his brothers still in confinement the comforts compatible with the prison regulations: "I have nothing to suffer except from ignorance of what is going on. I have books, and between prayer, reading, and study, the time passes almost as quickly as elsewhere; as for linen and aliment, charity does not permit us to want. Let nobody be the least uneasy about me.

"I have heard something said of proposals of exchange. *Absit!* I will none of it. I bear the situation pretty patiently, and shall as long as need be. There are so many reasons for refusing an exchange. Oh! no.

"Bid the charitable hand that feeds us to be less prodigal of its benefits to me. It may be flattering to it, but is rather shameful to me: *I am growing fat!* Will I be able to leave my cell when the hour of deliverance shall come? My cell, O horrors! is it a coop? Truly, I do not require so many things."

While it was still easy for him to correspond with persons outside the prison, he addressed two letters, foreseeing doubtless that they would be the last, to his two young nephews, Alexis and Henri, members of the little colony which had planted its tent at Saint Germain-en-Laye while awaiting the restoration of the College of Vaugirard. After the example of the Divine Master, *having*

loved his own, he loved them unto the end (John xiii. 1). His affection for them all, of which we have discovered so many proofs in his letters to his brother, never expressed itself in terms more earnest and tender. To little Henri, a child of ten years of age, he writes:

"My Dear Little Henri: I learn from your papa that you are very good and very attentive, therefore he is pleased with you, and your dear mamma is, and all of us, including your masters. Do not be discouraged because you are not at the head of your class; you are not the first boy in the class, but you are not the biggest boy either.

"You cannot be learned before having studied; and since you do study, you will become learned. Have confidence; you know very well that farmers sow in October to reap in August.

"Everything is going on first rate; do not be sad and discontented when we are all satisfied.

"To love our Lord dearly, to love the Blessed Virgin dearly, to perform your tasks faithfully, and to behave yourself well, is all you need. With that one should progress proudly and happily.

"With time you will grow in stature, in knowledge, in wisdom, and in graces. This is what is wished you by your affectionate uncle in our Lord, "Al. Clerc, S.J."

"Mazas, May 8, 1871."

The same day he wrote to little Henri's elder brother, who in baptism had received the name of his uncle:

"MAZAS, Monday, May 8, 1871.

"MY DEAR NEPHEW ALEXIS: Your father has brought me news of you, and, as it is good, I desire to congratulate you; I am obliged to do it in writing from my prison. He has told me of your success in your class, of your meriting the cross twice and also the ribbon, and of your docility being satisfactory to your masters. That is what makes a good scholar!

"As a good scholar fulfils all his duties well, he satisfies his masters and himself; he has no reproaches to dread, therefore he is confident; he has no fault to conceal, therefore he is frank; he has only compliments to receive, therefore he is agreeable; and he is disposed to like everybody, as everybody is disposed to like him.

"It should not be enough for you to be a good scholar and an amiable child; you must also be a holy child. God should have the place in your heart which belongs to him—that is, the first place. This is why what rejoiced me most was to learn that you show yourself as pious as you are good and industrious, and that you are first in Catechism class. You are thinking seriously of your First Communion, and are preparing for it with all the attention you are capable of. Your two sisters have given you a good example; you mean to follow it, and to leave a similar one to little Henri; that is the way piety increases in families and strengthens the bonds which unite them.

"However, you must in this, as well as in your studies and your conduct, moderate too great an

eagerness to do well and to succeed. What a joy it is for us, my dear Alexis, especially for your kind father and your tender mother, to have only this danger to dread for you! Still, it is to be dreaded.

"It is, perhaps, by forming your heart to a piety earnest but gentle, ambitious of pleasing God but asking of him the means of doing so, jealous of loving our Lord a great deal but asking him to give you that love, that you will learn to expect more (in other things, too) of God than of yourself, and, as an instance, to join in your labor and your good conduct ardor to moderation. It is not, you understand perfectly, my dear child, that your zeal should be diminished—to regulate it and to direct it prudently, is to strengthen and not to weaken it.

"I am confident, therefore, that you are going to make an excellent First Communion, and that our Lord, giving himself to you entirely, more generous to you than you will have been to him, will load you with blessings, and especially will fill your heart with an ineffaceable love for him; I shall not fail to pray that you may worthily perform that great act, and that you may draw from it abundant graces.

"Farewell, my dear child! Your uncle, a prisoner for the name of Jesus, who affectionately embraces you in Jesus' Heart. AL. CLERC, S.J."

The very day Father Clerc assumed that beautiful title, "Prisoner for the Name of Jesus," to the end that it might be still better justified in the eyes of all, the Commune ordered to be promulgat-

ed at Mazas a new decree, in virtue of which the parlor was suppressed for the priests and maintained only for the laics. Citizen Garreau had just been appointed director of Mazas. This new rule was, it was aptly said, "the largess of his joyous accession." *

But there is a Visitor whom the Commune will not keep back; it is he who said to his apostles: *I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.* And again: *If any one love me . . . my Father will love him, and we will come to him and will make our abode with him* (John xiv. 18, 23). Everything is being prepared for this august and, beyond all others, consoling visit, and we are now approaching the scene which to the eyes of faith is the most interesting in this revived drama of the catacombs that is to find its catastrophe in martyrdom. Let us leave the narration to the author of the "Acts," who was ignorant of nothing that then transpired, and whose heart would have guessed, if need had been, everything that was accomplished by a charity capable of braving all perils and surmounting all obstacles:

"May 15th.—In the midst of the month consecrated to Mary there dawns at last a beautiful day, a day of grace and joy, and the harbinger of another, henceforward near, of sacrifice and glory. The captives of Mazas did not cease repeating to heaven and earth: *Veni, Domine Jesu!*—Ah! come, Lord Jesus. *Etiam venio cito!*—'Yes,' was the reply,

* "Acts of the Captivity," etc., p. 118.

'behold I come.' Suddenly the gates burst open; the prisoners did not go forth, but Jesus entered.

"However, in the morning of that blessed day the Desired had not yet appeared.

"Father Clerc wrote with his ordinary cheerfulness: 'Your little message affords me much consolation and joy; I am very thankful for it, and I beg you to continue, as you know how to do, this kind assistance. You give me reason to hope for greater. Be it so! God is so good to us!

"'I continue to study mathematics and prepare my class; and when one has performed his exercises of piety the day has vanished. I catch a glimpse of a ray of light, and I hope for better times for our unfortunate country. For the present I am ever quite content to be in prison, so have no uneasiness about me. May God bless you for your charity! My compliments and affectionate wishes to all our friends in our Lord.

"'Oh! how separation makes us feel where our heart has fixed its love!'

"Father Olivaint, likewise warned, wrote to Father Lefebvre: 'What a providence it is that you have been able to remain down there! How manifest it is to me that the Lord has directed all! I am at the forty-first day of my retreat. From to-day I shall meditate only on the Eucharist.'

"Meanwhile everything was ready, within as well as without, for Jesus' entrance into the prison. First of all it had been necessary to inform the captives themselves of the ingenious and bold undertaking. As every letter sent from or received

at Mazas was opened and read, it had been contrived to slip notes in the dough of the rolls sent to the prisoners before putting them in the oven. The tenor of these mysterious notes was as follows: 'Circumstances are very grave; have courage! To-morrow you will receive the supreme consolation'; and at the foot: 'You will receive a vessel filled with milk, and at the bottom you will find what I announce to you.' The warning was received and understood, and the reply was sent from Mazas: *We shall be very glad to have the little pot of cream.* It was then thought that the delicate operation might be safely proceeded with. A priest's hand deposited four consecrated Hosts in an inner box completely lined with a corporal, and then enclosed in a second box with another little corporal and the silk bag with cord attached to suspend from the neck. The whole was placed in the hermetically-sealed false bottom of a pot quite filled with cream. There were only three of these pots—namely, for Father Olivaint, Father Ducoudray, and Father Clerc; this time those who planned the affair had not known how to manage it in the quarter of the prison where Father Caubert and Father de Bengy were confined.

"Towards the middle of the day the *little pots* and the *little boxes* * expected and so earnestly desired arrived at Mazas; half-past twelve was the propitious hour when all the prisoners were in their cells. The employees were obliging and

* These are the enigmatical expressions which Father Olivaint made use of in a preceding letter.

eager, astonished themselves at finding their sad rôle mitigated: at the prison gate a generous fee was bestowed upon them, and the most gracious welcome invited them to enter the cells. 'Ah! behold our good messengers,' Father Clerc did not fail to exclaim on seeing them.

"From that day our three privileged captives bore upon their breasts, as upon a living altar, the God of their heart and their portion for eternity. The holy undertaking being at last completed, each of them must immediately give some notification.

"In the evening of the 15th of May Father Olivaint hastened to send this little message of acknowledgment: 'I did not expect anything more to-day. My surprise, and I may say my consolation, were only the greater. I thank you again!—a big, an enormous thank you!

"'In my retreat I have been occupied for a long time with the Holy Ghost; now I am going to meditate upon the Eucharist.'

"The joy of the 15th of May could not be without a morrow. On the 16th there was at Mazas but one cry of gratitude. Father Clerc writes to one of his brothers:*

"'My Dear Emile: Supposing your almost anxious uneasiness about what was sent to us this morning, I have done all I could to relieve you of it. I have written a letter on the subject to my brother, and I believe it has already been sent. At the same time I fear lest my brother may not be in Paris, and lest he may not fully understand the

* Father Emile Chauveau.

importance of the commission I gave him, as I wrote it in words of double meaning. So at all events I will prepare this little message for you.

"'Everything reached us in perfect order and was arranged with admirable art and skill. I prefer to leave it to your piety to picture my joy, rather than attempt to do so with my pen. But I think I may say with full assurance that I defy all that may now happen. There is no more prison, there is no more solitude for me, and I am confident that if our Lord permits the wicked to satisfy all their hatred and to prevail for a few hours, he will prevail over them at the very moment of their triumph, and will glorify his name by the weakest and vilest instrument.

"'Let us bless God with all our strength, because his benefits to us are redoubled. Farewell. *Pax et osculum in Christo.**

"'ALEXIS CHRISTOPHE CLERC, S.J.†

"'P.S.—Bearing our Lord upon my heart, I was touched, while saying Vespers, with the prayer of the good Paschal Baylon.‡ Oh! how differently

* I wish you peace and embrace you in our Lord.

† It is well known that the name Christopher signifies the Christ-bearer.

‡ It was, indeed, the vigil of the feast of St. Pascal Baylon, a religious of the Order of St. Francis, celebrated for his devotion to the Blessed Eucharist. Here is the prayer: "*Deus, qui beatum Paschalem, Confessorem tuum, mirifica erga Corporis et Sanguinis tui sacra mysteria dilectione decorasti: concede propitius, ut quam ille ex hoc divino convivio spiritus percepit pinguedinem, eamdem et nos percipere mereamur*"—"Lord, who didst endow thy blessed confessor, Paschal, with an admirable love towards the sacred mysteries of thy Body and Blood, vouchsafe to grant us the grace that our souls, like his, may be strengthened and enlarged by that divine banquet" ("Breviar. Roman.," May 17).

he would have appreciated and given thanks for the great favor our Lord has bestowed upon his unworthy servant.'

"But here, written on the same day and for the same purpose, is Father Clerc's last letter, and in very truth his *Nunc dimittis:*

"'Ah! my God, how good thou art! And how true it is that the mercy of thy Heart shall never fail!

"'And you—what gratitude, what thanksgivings, do we not owe you? After having a thousand and a thousand times repeated the expression of my imperishable gratitude, and after having offered you on a new claim the feeble services of a heart at least sincere and devoted, it remains to me to wish that the gift you make me may be always made to you, and especially in days of trial.

"'I had not dared to conceive the hope of such a blessing—to possess our Lord, to have him for the companion of my captivity, to bear him upon my heart and to repose upon his, as he permitted his beloved John! Yes, it is too much for me, and what never entered my thoughts. Yet it is a fact. But is it not true that all men and all the saints together would never have dared to conceive of the Holy Eucharist? Oh! how good, how compassionate, how kindly attentive is the God of the Eucharist!

"'Does it not seem as though he still makes us this reproach: *Hitherto you have not asked anything in my name: ask, and you shall receive?* I have him without having asked him; I possess

him and I shall nevermore abandon him, and my desire of possessing him, extinguished through lack of hope, is rekindled, and will but increase in proportion as the possession shall endure.

"'Ah! prison, dear prison, thou whose walls I kissed while saluting thee: *Bona crux!* What a treasure thou hast won me! Thou art no longer a prison, thou art a chapel. Thou art no longer even a solitude, since I am no more alone among thy shadows, and my Lord and my King, my Master and my God, dwells with me. It is no longer only in thought that I approach him, it is no longer only by grace that he approaches me, but he is really and corporally come to find and console the poor prisoner. He wishes to keep him company; he wishes it, and can he not do it, since he is omnipotent? But what marvels it has cost him to accomplish his wish! And you are a part of those marvels of the tenderness of the Heart of Jesus for his unworthy servant.

"'Oh! never end, my prison, that art worth to me the bearing of my Lord upon my heart, not as a sign, but as the reality of my union with him. During the first days I begged our Lord with great earnestness to call me to a more excellent testimony of his name. The worst days are not yet passed; on the contrary, they are approaching, and they will be so bad that the goodness of God will be constrained to abridge them; we are nearing them very fast. I had the hope that God would give me the strength to die well; to-day my hope is become a true and steady confidence. It seems

to me I can do all things in Him who strengthens me and who will accompany me even unto death. Will he ask my death? All I know is that if he does not ask it, I shall have a regret which only submission to his will can soften.

"'But if he does ask it, how large will be your share in that blessing of strength he will have lent me!'"

What is there for us to add? A priest, reading this letter from his pulpit to the faithful, compared it to the epistles of St. Ignatius of Antioch. Yes, certainly the resemblance is striking. It is because the same God dwelt in both and inspired them with the same fervor; and if Clerc had had, like that illustrious martyr, to explain himself before the judges, he would have spoken the same language: "I am a priest of Jesus Christ, to whom I sacrifice daily, and now I desire to sacrifice myself by dying for his glory as he died for my love."

The great succor our prisoners had received on May 15 was renewed eight days later in a truly providential manner, but a few hours before they were transferred from the prison of Mazas to that of La Roquette. I borrow this page also from the author of the "Acts":

"Monday, the 22d, towards noon, two weak and courageous women, on foot and with a burden they shared between them, under a burning sky travel for an hour over the broad, desolate districts which are trodden only by the patrols of the Commune. Where are they going? To Mazas. And what do they carry? The God of martyrs. This

time all precautions had been taken, the distribution was complete; each of our prisoners received four Hosts wrapped in a corporal as in a winding-sheet, duly enclosed in a little box, with the silk bag furnished with a cord to be suspended around the neck. By coming at such an hour the Lord Jesus seemed to repeat to his servants his words of olden days: *Iterum venio et accipiam vos ad meipsum*—"I come again, not to remain with you, but to take you to myself."

Thus each already bore about him his Viaticum, and at the approach of the last combat it was in their power to offer to several of their companions in captivity the great charity of breaking with them the Bread of the Strong.

That very day quite late in the evening they were crowded into carts and driven to La Roquette, the prison of the condemned. On their arrival nothing was ready to receive them; they were kept a long while in a sort of waiting-room furnished with wooden benches fixed against the walls. The Archbishop of Paris was there seated like the others on his bench between President Bonjean and M. Deguerry, curé of the Madeleine. The latter having addressed the prelate by his honorary title, a guard rudely calls out to him: "Citizens, there are no lords here." At the same moment one of the prisoners (a witness says it was Father Clerc) rises from his place, and, kneeling before monseigneur, kisses his hand and asks his blessing. Then, having noticed the feeble appearance of the unfortunate archbishop, he opens

a little parcel he has under his arm and offers him some provisions saved from Mazas.

Finally they are conducted to their cells, where they find the entire furniture consists of only a bed, composed of a straw mattress and one blanket. Fathers Ducoudray and Clerc, again together, were put in the fourth section on the first story, not far from the archbishop and M. Deguerry. After the first night spent in his new prison, Father Clerc informed his brother of his change of domicile in a note significantly laconic, written beneath the eyes of the turnkeys and agents of the Commune:

"My dear Jules: Yesterday, Monday, the 22d, we were removed from our late residence, and we are now at La Roquette, probably for greater safety. Last night I saw the moon and the stars, and I am writing to you on the ledge of my window under the blue sky. I have neither table nor chair. The life of man can be greatly simplified.

"We are ignorant of our new conditions of existence; they seem not to include an isolation as complete as at Mazas.

"Grande Roquette, Fourth Section, No. 6."

In reality there is no longer the isolation of the cellular system. From his window, which now opens about breast-high and gives free entrance to the air and sun, the prisoner perceives at first running round the building a broad enough road which serves as a place for walking and recreation. Beyond, his eyes encounter one of the two high walls between which runs a second road, where in two days he will

meet his death. By an arrangement, which is the same throughout the prison, his cell, adjoining that of President Bonjean, is separated from it by only a thin partition, which likewise divides the common window. At a given signal the two prisoners can meet almost face to face, and there is nothing to prevent them from holding the most private conversations—a providential circumstance, as we shall see.

When the weather permitted, the prisoners descended twice a day for a promenade in the first road. They met there for the first time on Tuesday, between eight and nine o'clock, while the employees of the prison were doing the morning work in their poor cells. The outpourings of heart of those hours, each one of which might be their last, the happiness felt at meeting again after so long a separation, especially by those whom the bonds of religious brotherhood more closely united, may be better imagined than expressed. If the "Ecce quam bonum" could not be sung in such a place, the sentiment to which it responds was not the less present in every heart. What unanimity in our beloved brothers' generous acceptance of the greatest of sacrifices, and in their ardent wishes for the unfortunate country of which they would not despair! There reigns a wonderful harmony in their words, piously collected by the author of the "Acts." I will repeat a few of them, taken either from their letters written at Mazas, or from those memorable conversations of La Roquette when their voices were heard for the last time.

To the sound of the cannon that shook his cell

Father Olivaint wrote: "Those frightful cannon that thunder incessantly! Oh! how they worry me; but how, also, they remind me to pray for our poor country! If the giving of my miserable life would put an end to all the trouble, how quickly I would make the sacrifice!"

More composed, Father Caubert did not cease to pray for France and for Paris, and he had hope of a better future. "I have the conviction that it will not be long before all hearts will understand one another and unite in one same spirit of concord and charity." To a celebrated advocate who visited him in his prison, he said: "This is a very great trial for the country, and will save it." And as his visitor expressed his doubts of such a result, "For me, I have no doubt," Father Caubert added. "I am sure, I believe firmly, that France will come forth regenerated, more Christian, and consequently stronger than she has ever been before."

Did not Father Clerc on his side write: "I distinguish a ray of light, and I have the hope of better times for our unhappy country"?

"*Ibant gaudentes! . . .*" were the first words that escaped the lips of Father Ducoudray at the moment of his arrest. He repeated them at the Conciergerie, and his joy in suffering for Jesus Christ never failed him. From his cell in Mazas he wrote: "From the first day of my arrival here I have kept myself ready for all sacrifices, for I have the sweet and strong confidence that if God makes of us, priests and religious, hostages and victims, it is truly *in odium fidei, in odium nominis*

Christi Jesu—in hatred of the faith, in hatred of the name of Jesus Christ." On the very day of his death he was heard at La Roquette to repeat: "If we are shot, it is certain to me that it will be in hatred of the faith. At that rate our purgatory will not be long." Father de Bengy expressed himself on the same subject: "God likes us to offer our gifts to him with a joyous heart, and as there is no gift more considerable than that of life, we must render it perfect by making it joyfully." Do we need to recall Father Olivaint's sentiments? Already for many years he had sighed but for martyrdom. One day, hearing a sermon on the Japanese martyrs, he was seized with unutterable transports. It seemed to him that his breast opened and that streams of blood flowed from it. Thinking then that perhaps he would be a martyr, he could no longer contain his joy. We have heard Father Clerc: "I have earnestly begged our Lord to call me to a more excellent testimony of his name. . . . It seems to me that I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me, and who will accompany me even to death. Does he ask my death? What I know is that if he does not ask it I shall have a regret which only submission to his will can soften."

Now we are not astonished when an ocular witness tells us: "I saw all your fathers and I heard them talk; they were calm and smiling in the evening of their life as though it was the dawn of a beautiful day. Father de Bengy had lost nothing of his sang-froid and gayety; Father Cau-

bert of his pleasant and modest recollection ; Father Clerc of his generous cheerfulness ; Father Ducoudray of his simple and dignified manliness : Father Olivaint of his quick energy and his radiant peace."

But we remember the Divine Guest they had received, and who was invisible in their midst. Each one of them bore him upon his heart. That was the secret of their invincible strength and their unalterable serenity.

It is known that they did not keep the heavenly gift for themselves alone. Those days were to all the hostages an admirable preparation for death ; the priests confessed one another and heard the confessions of the laymen ; laymen and priests, expecting to die from one moment to the next, held themselves in readiness to appear before God and to make the sacrifice of their lives generously.

There was among all the rest one soul which infinite mercy confided more particularly to the zeal and charity of Father Clerc—the soul of President Bonjean, his next-cell neighbor. By very good right the president did not pass for a friend of the Jesuits, and his ultra-parliamentary gallicanism had made some noise in the discussions of the Senate. But gallicanism, indeed ! What was it at such a moment ? Seen near to, the Jesuit appeared to him, before everything else, a priest carrying pardon in his hands and having the power to pronounce in the name of Jesus Christ the words of eternal life. At bottom those two souls were constituted to understand one another, for they both

possessed in the highest degree the religion of duty, and would admit of no compromise in matters of honor. If Father Clerc indignantly rejected the idea of an exchange of prisoners between Paris and Versailles, of which his friends wished to assure him the benefit, the president also had some of the same sort of magnanimous delicacy, and he was in reality a victim of his fidelity to what he regarded as one of the duties of his charge. Absent from Paris when the Commune seized the city without striking a blow, the courageous magistrate immediately returned to his post without much hope of serving the cause of order, and knowing perfectly well to what he exposed himself.* Arrested as early as the 21st of March while leaving his court-room, he had spent two whole months at Mazas, and, notwithstanding his advanced age (sixty-seven years), he bore the rigors of the prison discipline without showing any signs of weakness. There was question at one time of releasing him on parole, which would have enabled him to go to Normandy for a visit of a few hours to Madame Bonjean. The only fear then of himself and Madame Bonjean was lest it might happen to him to involuntarily break the parole given, and the noble woman wrote: "I share to such a degree your apprehension lest some accident independent of your will should oblige you to some in-

* M. Devienne, first president of the Court of Appeal, being absent and sick, M. Bonjean, the senior of the presidents of the chamber, became in reality the head of that important body and the first representative of the entire judiciary of Paris.

voluntary infraction of your promise given, that I hardly dare wish you to run such a terrible risk. But how few people understand the nobility of such a scruple!"

As one virtue never exists alone, the president forgave his enemies with all his heart, and during the first days of his captivity he signed a writing wherein we read: "Do not seek to discover the names of those who detain me here contrary to all justice and all reason; and especially never try to draw upon them any direct or indirect vengeance."

Finally, we will quote this advice, which he addressed to his children four days before his death: "Let not the persecution I suffer, and the bloody death which from one moment to another may terminate my laborious life, be to you a cause of discouragement. Do not say: 'Of what advantage to our father was that long fidelity to all his duties? Why did he not do like so many others who, less austere, less rigid, understood how to shield themselves from danger and are now enjoying a happy old age?' Oh! no, do not say thus, and give no heed to those who address such language to you; for my part, I who have never deceived any one, I who still less would deceive my children at this solemn moment, I declare to you that, miserable as may be the end which seems destined for me, I would at no price have acted otherwise than I have, and this is because the chief good, my dear children, is peace of conscience; and because that inestimable good can

exist only for him who is able to say : *I have done my duty.*"

He did it to the end, not only as an upright magistrate and a good citizen, but also as a Christian faithful to his baptismal engagements. So much nobility of character could not but inspire Father Clerc with a lively sympathy, and no doubt he knew how to make himself understood by the president when he had to treat with him of the greatest and most sacred of all duties. Their conversations, commenced at the common window, were prolonged during the time of promenade, and the other prisoners respected an intimacy the nature of which they easily enough conjectured. Besides, M. Bonjean practised no concealment, and we refer to his own testimony for our information. During the recreation of the day (May 23), which was usually taken in the first road, the archbishop, fatigued by long walking, as there was no place to sit, leaned against the baluster of the little staircase leading to the corridor of the first story. One of his vicars-general and M. Bonjean approached him ; the latter, M. Bonjean, looked radiant. "Eh bien ! monseigneur," he said to the prelate, "who would ever have thought that I, the gallican, would be converted by a Jesuit ?" *

Father Clerc had just made his last conquest, had just harvested the last joy of his sacerdotal zeal.

The sun of the 24th of May rose in splendor over the city, which all night long had been illuminated

* "The Acts," p. 170.

by the flames of great conflagrations. Paris was burning . . . ; its palaces and monuments, saturated with petroleum by the hands of the insurgents, taught us what civilization without God is capable of. In proportion as the regular army gained ground, as the iron circle was narrowed around the Commune at bay, the struggle, growing bloodier and more violent, was concentrated in the arrondissements near La Roquette. Two steps from the prison, on the heights of Père Lachaise, batteries of heavy artillery thundered and vomited incessantly over all the districts of that section a rain of iron and fire. Father Clerc must have remembered his own words : *The hour of their most evil counsels will be that of their greatest reverses.* From the earliest dawn of that day, lamentable for our unfortunate country, but so glorious to him, he prepared himself for the combat. Did he not possess in his prison Him who is the *Strength of martyrs?* He fed himself with his sacred flesh, and, doubtless careful to husband the treasure of the sacred species, he was able not only to prolong his thanksgiving, but to continue his adoration the whole day.

That same morning Father Olivaint carried the Blessed Eucharist to the Archbishop of Paris, and the curé of the Madeleine received it from the hand of Father de Bengy. The young ecclesiastic, who had Father Ducoudray for his neighbor, and who survived him, knew positively that he also bore upon his breast the Blessed Sacrament, and communicated himself in his cell. The two customary recreations

took place just as the day before; they were grave without the least doubt, but the heart still found cause to dilate while breathing in that reunion of brothers the aroma of charity. M. Amodru and M. Lamazou, of the clergy of Paris, have described the generous and indulgent sentiments which animated the archbishop and the curé of the Madeleine, who as yet did not anticipate so tragic an issue, incapable as they were of believing in so much hatred. No word has come to us gathered in that last hour from the lips of Father Clerc; we only know that his frequent *tête-à têtes* with President Bonjean were noticed, as well as the truly filial respect he showed the archbishop on every occasion. Henceforth his history blends with that of the five hostages who suffered death with him, and it is for the author of the "Acts" to relate to us how that day was finished by the bloody immolation wherein our generous combatant so joyfully gained the palm of martyrdom:

"The Commune, intrenched then in the mayoralty of the eleventh arrondissement, had no more strength but for crime; alas! it still had too much for that. It orders as urgent the execution in a body of all the hostages of La Roquette. At six o'clock in the evening over sixty prisoners are to be shot by way of reprisal. The keeper of the prison finds means to start difficulties regarding the matter rather than the form of this extreme measure of desperate men who have nothing more to lose. They parley, and, after some going and coming between La Roquette and the mayoralty of the elev-

enth arrondissement, the Commune consents only to decimate the sixty on the express condition of itself selecting its victims of preference. At all hazards it will have priests—those men who have been a nuisance in the world for eighteen hundred years; and, through a singular association, the name of President Bonjean is likewise on the list. Nearly two hours are spent in these dread negotiations.

"It was then about eight o'clock in the evening. All the prisoners were in their cells and the only conversations were with Heaven. Suddenly a confused noise is heard in the distance, growing more and more distinct; voices of men and boys, outcries, and laughter still more ferocious, mingle with the din of arms. It was the approach of the doers of great deeds: for six victims not less than fifty executioners, Avengers of the Republic and Garibaldians, soldiers of all arms and National Guards of all costumes, and those terrible boys known as the gamins of Paris. At their head marched a blond man with a moustache like a brush. 'Citizens,' he said, addressing his band, 'you know how many of us are missing—six. Shoot six of them!' The detachment penetrates that corridor of the first story, fourth division, where our dear captives are, passes along its whole length, and ranges itself at the opposite extremity at the head of the little winding staircase which leads to the inner road; on the passage each prisoner had in advance received through his open grating an insult and a sentence of death.

"Then a personage performing the part of her-

ald in a loud voice summons the prisoners to hold themselves ready and to each respond as his name is called. This said, the fatal list in his hand, he immediately announces with the same qualifying title for all, and following the numerical order of the cells, the names of the six condemned by the Commune. Accordingly as his name is pronounced a door opens and a victim gives himself up. M. Bonjean, M. Deguerry, M. Clerc, M. Ducoudray, M. Allard, and M. Darboy are successively called.

"The Abbé Gard, the ordinary witness of Father Ducoudray in his cell, here adds a detail I am anxious to preserve: 'I was in bed Wednesday evening when they came to make the call. When Father Ducoudray was named he must have been at prayer and did not hear; he remained quiet for at least half a minute, and I had to warn him. Then I heard him throw himself upon his knees, and doubtless he consumed the sacred species he still bore upon his heart. I asked him to leave me a particle, but he replied: "No, no," whence I understood that all was consumed.'

"Now all the summoned are present. The archbishop and his companions, preceded and followed by the frightful escort, pass and descend one by one the narrow and dark staircase, and at the foot find themselves in that same road where but just now they were taking their recreation.

"Behold them, then, finally at the mercy of savage impiety and a more than brutal insolence. One of the officers of that ignoble band even had to interfere, and, compassionate after his fashion,

'Comrades,' he cried, 'we have something better to do than to abuse them; we have to shoot them. This is the order of the Commune.'

"So great was the irregularity and confusion of those days that the place of execution had not even been fixed. Any place was good enough for shedding blood. Therefore they were on the point of doing their work there in that very place. But it was suggested that it was very near the prison, under the windows even of the prisoners; there would be too many witnesses of the crime. It was true; from all those windows, on all the stories, the eye looks into the first road, and the prisoners left in their cells would from above assist at that death scene, would hear all, see all. It was decided to pass into the second road, where there would be a screen of two high walls. They start; a corporal heads the procession; behind him walk those who are to die, grouped thus: Monseigneur the Archbishop of Paris gives his arm to M. Bonjean; Father Ducoudray and Father Clerc accompany and support on each side the venerable curé of the Madeleine, burdened with his eighty years; and last comes the Abbé Allard; then around and behind the armed men and boys in a sort of crowd. As this line began to move one of the prisoners at a window of the first story shook his handkerchief in sign of farewell; Father Ducoudray turned and saluted him with a gesture. He was then seen to open his cassock and lay his hand upon his breast, doubtless to indicate that they were going to be shot.

"At the extremity of the first road there was a necessary halt; the gate leading into the second had to be forced. From that point the victims disappeared, and the only witnesses of the rest of the tragedy were those who will not come forward to testify: the executioners themselves. All that is known is that they had still to walk the whole length of the second road, in a contrary direction to their course on the first, as far as the southeast angle. It is also related that the generous Father Alexis Clerc, who had so earnestly desired to render to the name of Jesus the most excellent testimony, that of blood, opened his cassock and presented his heart to welcome death. And, finally, it is inferred from the deep marks of the stray balls that the victims were ranged in a line at the foot of the high outer wall.

"Meanwhile, what anxious expectation in the cells of the prison! On their knees the inmates prayed, listened, scarcely breathing. They heard a round of musketry, then some detached shots, and cries of '*Vive la Commune!*' It was over; there were no longer victims, but martyrs!

. . . . . .

"Towards midnight there was a great noise around the prisoners. Was it another hostile visitation? Soon the gratings at the extremities of the corridor and the gates of all the avenues were closed with a crash, and these words, pronounced in a tone of authority, were distinguishable: 'If they come back I forbid their admittance!' It was merely a putting off for a time.

"A little later there was a dull rumbling along the second road; they were removing the six bleeding corpses. The bodies, thrown rather than laid in a small hand-cart, arrived at the Cemetery of Père Lachaise about three o'clock in the morning; and there, without coffins, without any ceremony, they were hurried pell-mell into the common grave at the end of a long trench opened in the south-east corner of the cemetery, close against the wall of enclosure."

When the hideous Commune was crushed and our troops occupied the Cemetery of Père Lachaise, haste was made to find the bodies of the victims; they were discovered beneath about three feet of earth soaked by the recent rains, were defiled with bloody mud and greatly disfigured, but still perfectly recognizable. After they all were placed in coffins, the cemetery chapel temporarily received M. Bonjean and M. Allard, and while a guard of honor accompanied his grace the archbishop and M Deguerry as far as the archiepiscopal palace, Fathers Ducoudray and Clerc, likewise escorted by soldiers, were borne to our residence in the Rue de Sèvres and deposited in the church, in the chapel dedicated to the Japanese Martyrs. There they were soon rejoined by Fathers Olivaint, Caubert, and De Bengy, massacred on Friday, May 26, together with forty other hostages—priests and soldiers—in the court of the Cité Vincennes, Rue Haxo.

I will not describe the funeral, celebrated on Wednesday, May 31, amid an emotion easy to be imagined; the allocution addressed to the vast

assembly by the venerable M. Hamon, curé of St. Sulpice, from whose trembling lips escaped the word *Martyrs;* and, finally, the eloquent and touching oration pronounced at the Cemetery of Mont Parnasse by Count Eugène de Germiny in the name of all the pupils of Fathers Olivaint and Ducoudray. This should be sought in the "Acts," if the reader has not already perused them, and no line of it should be passed over.

The bodies of our dear victims repose to-day in the Chapel of the Martyrs, beneath the pavement of the sanctuary, and under the altar steps, a sentiment easy of explanation having been unwilling to permit them to be left any longer in our ordinary place of sepulture without any distinguishing mark. Now, at least, the faithful may cover their tombs with garlands of immortelles and fresh flowers, to say nothing of our own advantage in having our house filled, by the near presence of their precious remains, with the sweet fragrance of sacrifice.

Five broad slabs of marble, ornamented with inscriptions in the style of the Catacombs, indicate the spot occupied by each. Upon one of the five, at the extreme right (Epistle side), we read:

HIC IACET IN PACE P
· ALEXIVS CLERC
DOMO PARISIIS
PRESBYTER SOCIETATIS JESV
NATVS ANNOS LI MENSES V DIES XIII
LIBENS FVSO SANGVINE FIDEM SIGNAVIT
IX KAL. IVN. A.D. MDCCCLXXI

Which, translated, is :

HERE RESTS IN THE PEACE OF CHRIST
ALEXIS CLERC,
PARISIAN BY BIRTH,
PRIEST OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS,
AGED LI. YEARS V. MONTHS XIII. DAYS.
GLADLY HE SIGNED THE FAITH WITH HIS BLOOD
THE 24TH OF MAY, OF THE YEAR OF OUR LORD MDCCCLXXI.

Verily, the author of this inscription was rightly inspired, and he wonderfully discerned Father Clerc's distinctive characteristic.* *Libens*, gladly —it is, indeed, a word well chosen ! See you not our generous martyr on his way to death, opening his vestment to welcome the balls to his heart, and overjoyed to render to Jesus Christ, as he had so earnestly desired, the most excellent testimony ?

His beautiful death has been described ere this, and has excited universal admiration ; henceforth, thank God ! it will be known that it was the crown of a life not less beautiful, a life hidden in God with Jesus Christ. Did not one of his friends predict : " Clerc will die a magnificent death " ? All those who observed him a little closely might have suspected something of the inner realities of his life ; but none had that intimate acquaintance with him which we have acquired in following him step by step for a period of about thirty years. From the time of his conversion to a sincere Catholic life he walked ever by the straightest path, and the obstacles he surmounted were not small.

* The five inscriptions are the work of Father Victor de Buck, the eminent Bollandist.

What a victory was that of his vocation! Opposed to the utmost by his own father, he sustained the rude assault without show or noise, but with what generosity and perseverance! We have torn aside the veil of his religious life: we see perpetual sacrifice. Everywhere we are conscious of the man of a great heart and a great faith who goes boldly ahead with all sails set. Whither will he not go when it is the Holy Spirit that fills the canvas?

I seem to hear issuing from his tomb these words by which he exhorts us in our turn to fight the good fight: *May God give you all a heart to worship him, and to do his will with a great heart and a willing mind* (2 Machab. i. 3).

You, young men, whom he so tenderly loved in our Lord, you will sometimes meditate on the counsels he gave those of your age and on the example he left to us all. Young, he struck on the rock of the passions, and his wanderings were probably greater than yours. But a superabundant expiation made a new man of him, and you have seen with what holy ardor he was devoured. Whatever may have been the first steps of your life, there is still time for you to make a noble use of your strength; nothing is lost with God's help; and—I say it to others besides you—the laborers of the eleventh hour may receive the wages of the whole day, provided they redeem by their diligence the time they have foolishly squandered.

Our narration is ended; still, we have yet to add a word which finds its place naturally here and which the reader doubtless expects.

We said just now that public piety instinctively felt that those remains deposited in the Chapel of the Martyrs were themselves relics of martyrs. And ever since a spontaneous impulse has brought the faithful to that sanctuary of benediction. It is not as yet the exterior worship the Church forbids until she has authorized it, but it is interior and private veneration, the prayer of the heart which does not even always ascend to the lips; and it seems as though Heaven justifies such confidence by extraordinary, we may say miraculous, graces.

Not far from the chapel a hall open to the pious visitor offers to his regard the furniture of the five cells occupied by the hostages at Mazas; the bed, the table, the chair, nothing is wanting; there are also added certain articles of private use of each of them, such as the half-burned breviary of Father Olivaint and his instruments of penance. On a table apart may be seen some marble tablets, the inscriptions on which bear witness to the petitions addressed to the victims of La Roquette and the Rue Haxo, and the favors obtained.

Besides these, there is in the last edition of the "Acts," by the Rev. Father de Ponlevoy, a very full account of several cures which must be attributed to their intercession, since science is powerless to explain them. Five of the most remarkable of these facts have been submitted to the regular canonical process before a commission appointed by the ordinary. The competent authority has been appealed to, and its decision is confidently

awaited. To Rome alone it belongs to pronounce in the cause of the servants of God.

But without judging anything in advance, may we not already indulge the hope that a day will come when the Church will place upon her altars, with his four companions, Alexis Clerc, sailor, Jesuit, and hostage of the Commune, put to death in hatred of the faith ?

Then the glory of his sanctity will be reflected upon Catholic schools and upon the French navy. The navy which gave this valiant soldier to the Society of Jesus and to the Church, may with good right honor him as one of her most attractive models and of her most beloved protectors.

THE END.

APPENDIX.

FATHER CLERC'S ACT OF CONSECRATION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS.

CONSECRATIO

Sacratissimo Cordi D. N. J. C.

Domine Jesu Christi, qui dixisti: "Discite a me quia mitis sum et humilis corde," ut cor meum secundum Cor tuum facere digneris; ego Alexius Clerc, omnimodo indignissimus, me totum omniaque mea ad Sacratissimum et amabile nimis Cor tuum devoveo, et consacro.

A tua ergo immensa bonitate et clementia, per Sanctissimæ Cor Immaculatum Virginis Mariæ peto supplicıter, ut hoc holocaustum in odorem suavitatis admittas, et ut largitus es ad hoc desiderandum et offerendum, sic etiam ad explendum per ipsum Cor tuum, et cum ipso

CONSECRATION

To the Most Sacred Heart of O. L. J. C.

Lord Jesus Christ, who hast said: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart," in order that thou mayest be pleased to make my heart like unto thy Heart, I, Alexis Clerc, in every way most unworthy, do devote and consecrate myself and all that is mine to thy most holy and more than lovable Heart.

Therefore I humbly beseech thy infinite goodness and mercy, by the Immaculate Heart of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, that thou wilt vouchsafe to admit this holocaust in an odor of sweetness, and what thou hast given me the grace to desire and offer, so also, by

et in ipso gratiam uberem largiaris. Amen.

the merits of thy divine Heart itself, with it and in it, thou wilt bestow on me a plentiful grace to fulfil Amen.

Rev. Fr. Dorr, the Instructor of the Third Year, has heard and approved my resolution, and I have pronounced this Act of Consecration in his hands, November 25, 1869; for which I rejoice in the Lord, giving thanks a thousand times to the goodness of God and to the tenderness of the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ.

NOTE.—The military chaplains and other priests who passed all their time in the ambulances during the siege or Paris, allowed their beards to grow. The portrait of Father Clerc placed at the beginning of this translation is a good likeness, and represents him precisely as he appeared in the ambulance of Vaugirard during the terrible winter of 1870–71.

TRANSLATIONS

BY

M. E. C. D.,

TRANSLATOR OF "ALEXIS CLERC."

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